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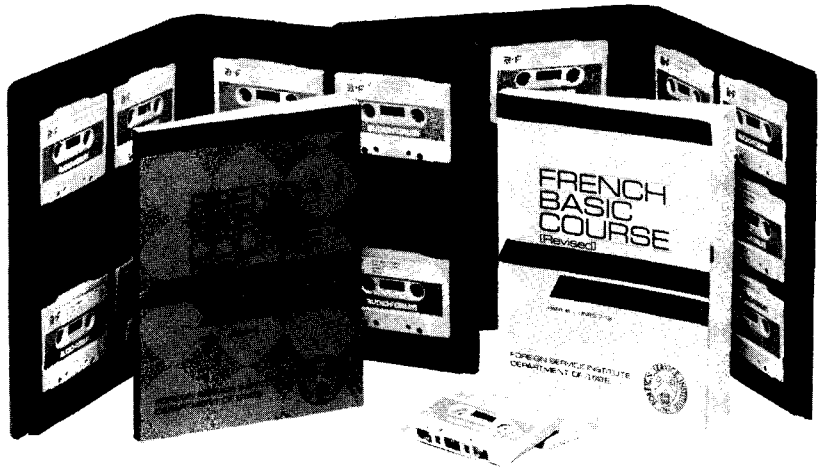

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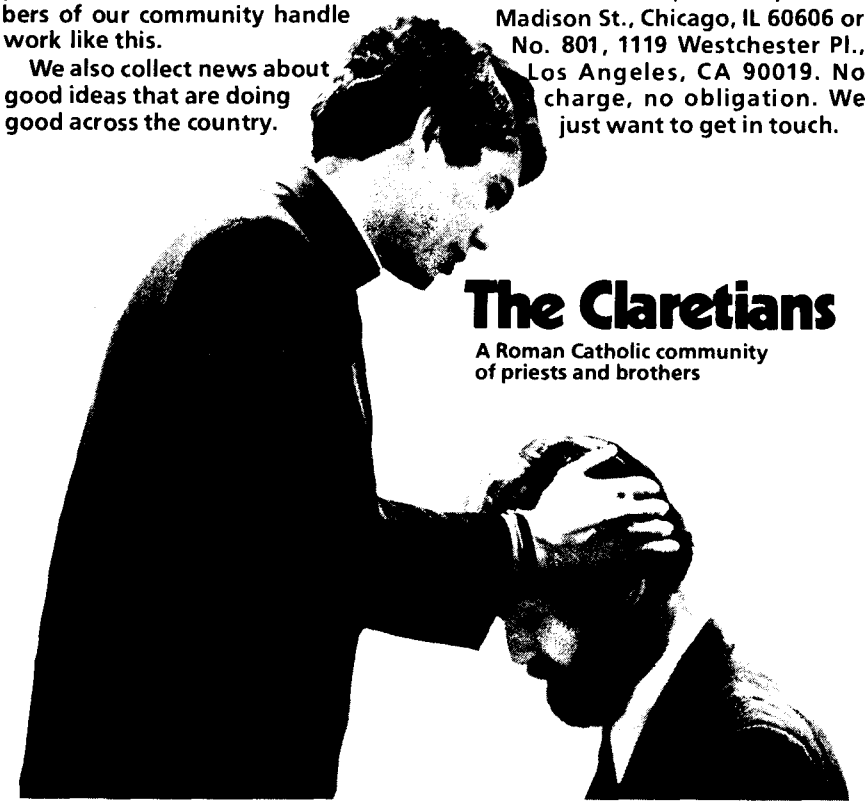

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Balls-Up

ARISTIDES

Three fantasies:

Primo: A Manhattan town house at a quite good address. The women in the room are very smartly dressed; the men are in dinner clothes. My hostess comes up to ask if I will agree to play. I demur, thanking her all the same. "Oh, please do," she says, with an earnestness I cannot find it in my heart to refuse. As I move toward the piano, a well-polished Baldwin grand, I hear a woman say, "He's going to play." Across the room, another woman murmurs, "He's going to play—I was so hoping he would!" I rub my hands together briefly, bend and unbend my fingers, and proceed to toss off a flawless rendering of "Rhapsody in Blue." As I finish, I notice that everyone seems to have gathered round the piano. Ice cubes tinkle; cigarette smoke wafts to the ceiling. I play and sing two Cole Porter songs, then follow up with Noel Coward's "Imagine the Duchess's Feelings," which has everyone in stitches. I move on to play and sing—first in English, then in French—"I Won't Dance." I close, gently and with just a touch of profundity, with "September Song." Applause envelops me. "Now that," says my hostess, handing me a fresh drink, "was simply unforgettable!"

Secondo: A hill overlooking the Loire Valley. I appear over the crest of the hill in white linen trousers, a chambray shirt, a wide-brimmed straw hat of the kind Pope John XXIII used to wear when he would go into the streets of Rome. It is a perfect day: the sun shines, flowers are everywhere in bloom, the river a serene azure. I set up my easel, my canvas chair, and, before beginning to mix my palette, eat a lunch of what Henry James once called "light cold clever French things." After lunch, working in watercolors, I begin to paint the vista before me in a strong line and with a use of color that falls between that of Degas and Dufy. I achieve a work that is obviously representational yet, such is the force of my character, my sensibility, my vision, is just as obviously a masterpiece. When I am done, I put away my materials with the confidence of a man who, though he knows he is out of step with the times, knows that his own time will come.

Terzo: A large empty room, good wood floors, clean light flowing in from the windows along its north wall. On the south wall is a mirror reaching from floor to ceiling. I enter, remove my suit coat, loosen my tie. I stretch my arms out to the side, turn my head first clockwise, then counterclockwise. I bend over to pick up three rubber balls, one red, one yellow, one blue. I toss the red ball from my right hand to my left, then back again to my right hand. I feel the heft and balance of each of the balls in my hands. I begin to juggle them, flipping a new ball into the air each time the previous one reaches its peak and begins its descent, all the while softly humming to myself the strains of "Lady of Spain." After three or four minutes of this, I add a fourth ball, a green one, which joins the cascade I create by juggling the balls gingerly from hand to hand. Then I add a fifth ball, orange; later a sixth, purple. Six balls in the air! The cascade has now become a rainbow revolving before me. My control is complete, my pleasure in this control no less. My only regret is that there is not room in my hands for a seventh ball. Perspiring lightly, effortlessly keeping all these balls in the air, I smile as I hum "Over the Rainbow."

Now of these three fantasies, two are not merely improbable but, for me, utterly impossible. Although I spend a goodly amount of time listening to records and going to concerts, I can neither read music nor play a mu-

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sical instrument. Worse, I was one of those children who, in grade school, was asked not to sing but just to mouth the words, lest my naturally off-key voice carry the rest of the class along with me into the thickets of dissonance. My drawing was of roughly the same discouraging caliber. In school periods devoted to art, teachers who walked up and down the aisles checking their students' sketches and paintings never stopped, or even hesitated, to gaze at mine, which were so clearly beyond help or comment. If there were an artistic equivalent to mouthing words—a colorless crayon, say, or disappearing paint—I would, I am certain, have been asked to avail myself of it.

Denied these two gifts, of song and of drawing, I have, in life's rather arbitrary lottery, been allotted a third. I am reasonably well coordinated. Delete that "reasonably": I am extremely well coordinated. ("Don't be so humble," Golda Meir once said, "you're not that great.") I was never big or fast or physically aggressive enough to be a first-class athlete, but, as a boy, I could catch anything, or so I felt. Grounders, liners, fly balls—I gobbled them up. Throw a football anywhere within fifteen yards of me, and I would be there to meet it. In tennis I was most notable for flipping and catching my racquet in various snappy routines. In my teens I mastered most of the ballhandling tricks of the Harlem Globetrotters: spinning a basketball on my index finger, rolling it down my arm and catching it behind my back, dribbling while prone. Quite simply, I had quick and confident hands. Perhaps I should be more humble about these playground skills, for I make myself sound pretty great.

Great and humble though I apparently am, juggling is something I have never been able, yet have long yearned, to do. It is one of those fantasies possible of fulfillment, like going to Greece. Besides, juggling seemed a harmless enough fantasy, involving neither the disruption of the ecosystem nor the corruption of children. And then one day not long ago, in the produce section of the grocery store where I shop, I saw the owner's wife, an Irishwoman of great high spirits, juggling three navel oranges. So filled with envy was I that I determined then and there to learn to juggle.

When an intellectual wants to learn something he goes to the library. He reads up. But it turned out that at my library there was not much to read on the subject of juggling. The library's two books on juggling had been taken out. The library also had a novel entitled *The Juggler* by Michael Blankfort, but it, too, was gone from the shelves. Doubtless this novel is not about juggling at all but instead uses the word metaphorically, as does the final entry in the library's catalogue on the subject, *Juggling: The Art of Balancing Marriage, Motherhood, and Career.* No help there. It was beginning to look, as the English say, like a bit of a balls-up.

I remembered that Hazlitt wrote an essay entitled "The Indian Jugglers," which I reread. It starts magnificently: "Coming forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in." Hazlitt proceeds to describe the Indian juggler's act, noting that the juggler astonishes while giving pleasure in astonishment. "There is something in all this," he writes, "which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never admired really anything in the whole course of his life." Reading this I felt one of the keenest delights that reading offers: the discovery that someone more intelligent than yourself feels about a given subject exactly as you do.

Hazlitt then moves on to compare the juggler's skill with brass balls to his own skill with words—and finds the latter paltry in comparison. Nothing in his own work is so near perfection as that which the Indian juggler can do. "I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell," Hazlitt writes. His own essays—some of the greatest written in English—he calls "abortions." "What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions. How little is made out, and that little how ill!" The juggler can keep four balls in the air, but for Hazlitt "it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled." The juggler, through patient practice, has brought his skill to perfection, something which Hazlitt feels unable to come anywhere near doing with

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his. "I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions and polish my periods: but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do."

Anyone who does intellectual work will instantly recognize the cogency of Hazlitt's comments. So little does such work allow for a true sense of completion, or a satisfying feeling of perfection. Every artist has felt this, and the better the artist the more achingly has he felt it. "A poem is never finished," said Valéry, "but only abandoned." If Hazlitt and Valéry, two workers in diamonds, felt this way about their works, imagine how those of us who labor with zircons feel about ours! As an old costume jeweler, I must say, I appreciate the possibility that juggling holds out for perfection—for doing the small thing extremely well.

For me, though, more is involved. Within very serious limits I am a self-improvement buff, if only a failed one. Of myself in this connection I can say, every day in every way I stay pretty much the same. A few years ago, for example, I set out to learn classical Greek. Aglow with the luster of self-betterment, I enrolled myself in a course in Greek at the university where I teach—and lasted a cool and inglorious two weeks. Walking into the room on the first day of class, I was taken for the teacher, a natural enough confusion since I was more than twenty years older than anyone else in the course (except for the actual teacher, who turned out to be roughly twenty years older than I). Being the old boy, I felt a certain obligation not to appear stupid. The option taken by a likeable fellow named Fred McNally, who more than two decades ago sat next to me in an undergraduate French class, and who whenever called upon answered through an entire semester, "Beats me, sir," did not seem an option open to me. Given my natural ineptitude with foreign languages and my fear of having to avail myself of the McNally ploy, I found myself studying Greek two hours a night. Add to this another hour for class and yet another hour for getting there and back, and nearly one fourth of my waking life was given over to this little self-improvement project. The result was the general disimprovement of everything else in my life. In the end I decided that learning Greek would have to be on that long list of items I must put off until the afterlife.

Juggling balls is surely less time-consuming than juggling Greek paradigms, but is it really self-improving? Having thought a bit about this, I have concluded that it is not a whit self-improving. Juggling is in fact the recreational equivalent of art for art's sake. It is not good exercise; you do not do it in the sunshine; it is not an excuse for gambling; it does not simulate the conditions of life; it teaches no morality (you can't even cheat at it, a prospect which lends so many games, from golf to solitaire, a piquant touch). Unlike, say, playing in the outfield, you cannot even think of anything else while doing it. Juggling is all-absorbing and an end in itself: *le jeu pour le jeu.*

Juggling is play, almost with a vengeance. "We may call everything play," writes Santayana, "which is useless activity, exercise that springs from the physiological impulse to discharge energy which the exigencies of life have not called out." Juggling also satisfies some of the criteria Huizinga lays down for play in *Homo Ludens.* It does, as Huizinga puts it, "create order, *is* order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusions of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection." And juggling is certainly, to quote Huizinga again, "invested with the noblest qualities we are capable of perceiving in things: rhythm and harmony." Excluding people who use it to make a living by entertaining others, however, juggling is neither a fine nor a useful art, but rather a delicate, slightly perverse activity. No self-improvement, no end other than itself, sheer play, exquisitely useless—these are among the qualities that endear juggling to me.

Some people can do entirely without play, but I am not one of them. Neither is Georges Simenon, who, I was surprised to learn while recently reading his journal, *When I Was Old,* is of all things a golfer. Nor was Hazlitt, who was a dedicated player of fives, an English version of handball. Matthew Arnold was an ice skater. Ezra Pound enthusiastically—as, unfortunately, he did everything—played tennis. Edmund Wilson was a passionate amateur magician. Other artists and intellectuals, if not themselves players, were devoted followers of games: G. H. Hardy, the Cambridge mathematician, of cricket, and Marianne Moore of baseball. While I am unable to report that T. S. Eliot had a bowling average of 192 or that Einstein was a pool

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shark, my guess is that among the most serious mental workers there is many a hidden player.

My own small problem is that sources of play have been drying up on me. For many years now I have been unable to take any interest in mental games: crossword puzzles, chess, bridge, Scrabble. Even poker, a game I once loved, no longer retains much interest for me, unless the stakes are high enough to frighten me. Basketball, another former love, is now too vigorous a game for me, and I can today walk under a glass backboard without even wistfully looking up. As a boy, I was a quite decent tennis player, but I find I have no appetite for being a mediocre player in a game I used to play well. I do play the game called racquetball, yet if a week goes by in which I do not get on the court, I do not weep.

The reason I no longer take any interest in mental games, I have concluded, is that I do mental work, and consequently seem to have little in the way of mental energy left for mental play. I have noticed, by the way, that many people who have a great deal of zest for such games, and who are very good at them, are often people of real intelligence whose work does not require them to make strenuous demands on their mental powers. For myself, I would rather be thinking of phrases or formulations to be used in essays than of how best to get off a blitz or of a four-letter word that means payment in arrears.

As for my loss of interest in physical games, here the problem, I think, is that I have lost the power to fantasize while playing. When playing tennis or basketball, for example, I find I can no longer imagine myself at center court at Wimbledon or in the final game of the NCAA at Pauley Pavilion, the sort of thing I invariably did as a boy. Nor am I sufficiently competitive to enjoy winning for its own sake, even though it is rather better than losing. The friend with whom I play racquetball and who is a much better athlete than I—as a boy he was an all-state football player and later a Big Ten wrestling champion—is even less competitive than I. Sometimes I wonder how either one of us ever manages to win the games we play against each other, and it usually turns out that not the better man but the least tired man wins.

Nor have I ever had the discipline or concentration to play solitary games. Running, still much in vogue, is out of the question for me. I have never been able to take calisthenics of any sort seriously. I own a bicycle, which I ride occasionally and which gives me pleasure, but this is scarcely a game. In fact, it has become most useful to me as part of a riposte. Lately, when people suggest I must be making a lot of money as a fairly productive writer, I reply, "If I am doing so well, how come I'm still riding a reconditioned three-speed Huffy?"

All this makes it the more interesting to me that I am so keen about juggling—a form of play that is both solitary and requires real discipline. Despite such drawbacks, juggling thrills me. In the phrase of the bobby-soxers of the late 1940s, it really sends me. Another drawback is that juggling, unlike other games and sports—if juggling is indeed a game or a sport—does not have an established lore, a pantheon of heroes. It is, of course, a very old form of play: court jesters, I believe, had juggling in their repertoires. But if there was a Babe Ruth, a Jim Thorpe, or a Joe Louis of juggling, I have not heard of him.

True, many of the silent-movie stars, who came out of vaudeville, juggled. Charlie Chaplin did and so did Buster Keaton. I recall a hilarious Buster Keaton movie—which of his movies isn't hilarious?—in which Buster is a contestant on a radio amateur hour and whose talent turns out to be juggling. Juggling, mind you, over the radio. In the movie Keaton, deadpan as always, is blithely tossing balls in the air while in their homes the members of the listening audience are banging away on the sides of their Philco consoles, certain that the silence is attributable to a loose tube. A splendid bit.

W. C. Fields broke into show business as a juggler, a skill at which he was said to be consummate. In Robert Lewis Taylor's biography, *W. C. Fields: His Follies and Fortunes*, Fields is said to have begun juggling at the age of nine, inspired by the vaudeville performance of a group calling itself the Byrne Brothers. Fields's father hawked fruit and vegetables in Philadelphia, and Fields practiced on his father's wares. "By the time I could keep two objects going," he said, "I'd ruined forty dollars worth of fruit." He later worked with cigar boxes, croquet balls, Indian clubs, and odd utensils. In his early adolescence he was obsessed with juggling. He

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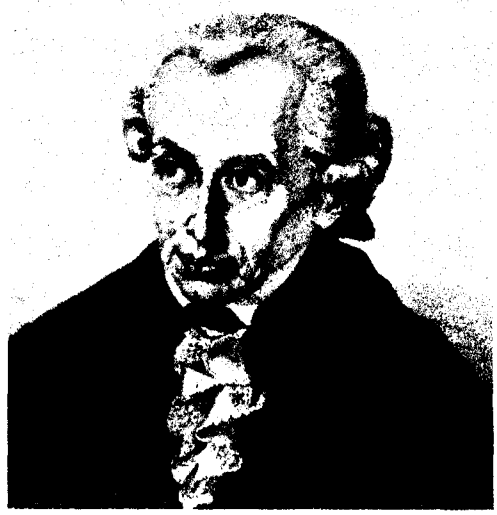

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worked hours and hours at it, teaching himself to keep five tennis balls in the air, catching canes with his feet, and performing any other kind of trick he could dream up.

Fields's specialty as a juggler was to appear to fumble, then recover from what had all the marks of a disastrous error. He never lost his relish for this artful bumbling. Later in life, while serving his guests at large dinner parties, Fields would fill a plate, preferably for a comparative stranger, and, as he would begin to hand it down the line, drop it, "provoking," as his biographer tells it, "a loud concerted gasp. With consummate nonchalance he would catch it just off the floor, without interrupting whatever outrageous anecdote he was relating at the moment." But the best juggling story Robert Lewis Taylor tells is about the night Fields was working on some new trick in a hotel room in Pittsburgh, when his continual dropping of a heavy object disturbed the tenant in the room below, a bruiser who came up to complain. The complainant recognized Fields as the juggler he had seen earlier that evening at a local theater. To calm the man down Fields taught him a simple trick calling for juggling two paring knives. "I hope he worked at it," Fields said in recounting the story, "because if he did, he was almost certain to cut himself very painfully." Fieldsian, absolutely Fieldsian.

Juggling today appears to be undergoing a small renaissance. Street jugglers appear in profusion along Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. In Manhattan they mingle among the multitudes of street vendors. Although I myself have not seen the act, there is at work nowadays a group known as the Brothers Karamazov that is said to give great satisfaction. Along with other odd-shaped objects, the Brothers K juggle running buzz saws and, most astonishing of all, live cats. A few new juggling books have recently been published: *Juggling for the Complete Klutz* is the title of one and *The Juggling Book* that of another. Have we the makings here of a wildly popular fad?

My guess is that we do not. For one thing, juggling is just too damned difficult to catch on—if you will pardon the expression—with great numbers of people. For another, it lacks manufacturing possibilities. Balls can still be bought at dime stores (if not quite, lamentably, for dimes). So far as I know, Adidas, Nike, Puma, and other sports-equipment manufacturers have yet to produce juggling shoes, juggling shorts, or juggling watches. Certainly there is no need for them. I myself, when juggling, wear the simplest costume: buskins turned up at the toes, gold pantaloons, a leathern jerkin, and a cap with bells.

But the time, surely, has come to get some balls in the air. How good a juggler am I? In two words, not very. In trying to explain my quality as a novice juggler I feel rather as Buster Keaton must have felt while juggling over the radio. I can keep three balls in the air for roughly two minutes. I do the conventional beginner's pattern known as "the cascade," in which the balls appear to be flowing over a perpetual waterfall. While juggling I can go from a standing to a kneeling position; I can juggle sitting down. I can vary the cascade pattern with the pattern known as "the half-shower," in which. . . . But I hear you banging on your Philco. Let me conclude then by saying that, as a juggler, I am far from ready for Vegas, television, or even small family parties.

Yet such limited prowess as I have I owe to my mentor, a man who calls himself, on the title page of *The Juggling Book*, Carlo. His real name is Charles Lewis. Mr. Lewis has done a bit of this and a bit of that, from teaching math and science in public schools to leading encounter groups to founding a spiritualist newspaper to organizing a small circus troupe. From the photograph of him on the back of the book—long dark hair, a gray beard, corduroy jeans, loose-sleeved East Indian shirt—he looks rather guruish, and guruish he turns out to be. The Carlo Method, as Mr. Lewis styles his teaching, is not without a large measure of current psycho-go-go gas. Given half a chance—and as the author of his own book, he has more than half a chance—Carlo will babble on about "levels of awareness," "great possibilities for creativity," "control and direction of body forces," "inner states," "healing effects on your psyche," and, natch, that old rotting botanical metaphor, "growing." Juggling, Carlo advises, will help me "continue to grow." Thank you, Carlo, but I was growing before I read your book: growing older, growing feebler, growing closer to death—growth enough, I should think.

When Carlo knocks off the psycho-spiritual

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palaver, which I find so *antipatico*, he is an excellent teacher. He writes clearly, and he takes the novice through each step slowly. He had me worried at first, though, when he said that juggling, like riding a bicycle or whistling, is something everyone can learn to do, since I, after repeated attempts to learn, can whistle only pitiably. Juggling turns out to be one of those activities (tennis is another) in which one benefits greatly from professional instruction at the outset. Fundamentals—how to position your body, how to hold the balls, how to toss them—are decisive. Unlike almost any other ball game, for example, you do not use your fingertips in juggling but instead toss the balls from your palms. In all these matters Carlo is very helpful. Sometimes, too, he will strike off a delicately humorous sentence, as when he advises not to reach up to catch the balls but rather to let them fall into your hands. "The balls will come down," he writes, "which I can guarantee from long experience." Sometimes he will hit exactly the right lyrical note, as when he writes: "Somehow there is a ball up there that's never going to come down. You realize suddenly that you never have to stop; you can juggle forever." He is right about that, and when it occurs, it is a golden moment. On the day it finally happened to me, after more than a week of practice, I felt sheer exhilaration and wanted to shout, "Look, Ma, both hands!"

Earlier I said that juggling does not provide much in the way of exercise. Let me amend that by saying that at the beginning you do get quite a bit of exercise—chasing the balls you drop. To cut down the chasing I began practicing in my wife's and my bedroom, juggling over the bed and thereby, as a friend remarked, turning a conjugal into a conjuggle bed. Not long afterward, by turning on our clock-radio, I added music to my practice sessions and discovered that the piano rags of Scott Joplin are particularly nice to juggle to. As my juggling began to improve, so did the music. Stan Getz's saxophone makes for fine juggling accompaniment and so do Haydn's piano trios and Telemann's wind concertos. Juggling to Strauss waltzes and Glenn Miller swing is lovely. Opera is no good at all.

Part of the delight of juggling is the rhythmical pleasure created by the clear and steady beat of the balls slapping against the palms. This gives a satisfaction roughly analogous to that which a beginning pianist must feel when running through rudimentary practice exercises. Tossing the balls first high, then low, then in wide, then in narrow arcs, I can also create pleasing if altogether ephemeral designs of a kind I could never achieve with a crayon or paintbrush. In these small ways, then, juggling has compensated me for two common pleasures—those of rhythm and design—that my natural inaptitudes have hitherto prevented me from enjoying.

To drift slightly into metaphor, juggling has supplied the possibility, however small, of chaos in my life. Since beginning to juggle I now realize how exceedingly well ordered my life has become. I read, I write, I teach, I live among family and friends whom I love. Nor would I have it otherwise. At the same time I have always marveled at, without necessarily admiring, those people who seem to have so high a threshold for chaos in their lives: people who can simultaneously carry on love affairs while behind in their alimony payments, have government liens on their businesses, and undergo chemotherapy—people who, to use a juggling metaphor, somehow manage to keep a lot of balls in the air. One such chaos merchant of my acquaintance, a man in his early fifties, recently married a woman of twenty-three while concurrently acquiring a mistress in her late forties, a brilliant reversal of the norm that had his friends surmising that he married for sex and kept a mistress for conversation. Whatever the case, the man is clearly a juggler.

At the same time, juggling is an exercise in subduing chaos. Keeping the balls in the air, making of them a fluid pattern, one achieves a pleasing kind of order. As with much art, the trick in juggling is to make the difficult look effortless. As Samuel Butler once put it,

> As lookers-on feel most delight,
> That least perceive a juggler's sleight,
> And still the less they understand,
> The more th' admire his sleight of hand.

Yet in juggling many are the moments—when a ball slips loose, when two balls collide in midair—when chaos wins and panic, for an instant, clutches the heart. At such moments one hears the knock of the house detective,

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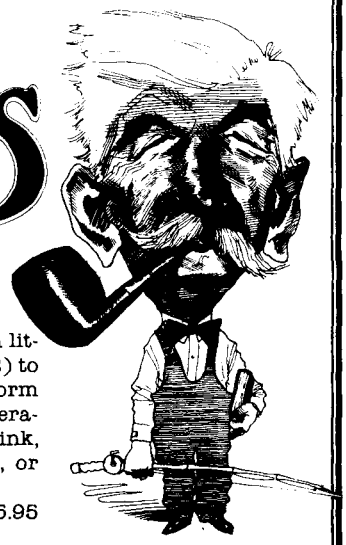

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feels the unopened IRS letter in the hand, sees the X ray being slid dramatically from its envelope.

While the balls are in the air, describing their arcs, slapping gently against my hands, with everything under control, I am happy. Perhaps this happiness comes from my complete preoccupation with what I am doing. Perhaps it comes from the thrill of beginning to master a skill, however small and insignificant. It is a thoughtless happiness, an almost animal happiness, but no less real for all that. With the balls flying about me, I am happy but not, I must confess, altogether content. Even in my happiness I wonder if it is not time to move on and learn new tricks. Ought I to begin to master juggling four balls? What about rings and then Indian clubs? My man Carlo says that juggling on your back while on a trapeze is just about as far as one can go with this sort of thing. "Man thou art a wonderful animal," says Hazlitt, "and thy ways past finding out." William, I say, you don't know the half of it.

Schönbrunn Yellow

WENDY BARKER

The summer palace of the Hapsburgs is yellow
and inside, gold climbs the walls like frozen ivy.

Maria Theresa had sixteen children in this house.
To keep them she had 400 maids.

The yellow walls are the same color
as the woman's apron in Brueghel's painting

who is dancing in black shoes on dirt
dancing in an apron thick with dried pork drippings,

an apron hardened in spots from scraps of dough.
Maria Theresa's favorite painting, the guide says,

is of three peasants, a family walking in mountains,
peasants like Brueghel's, dancing

and drinking, filling their cheeks with cereal
and beer the color of gold.

WENDY BARKER's poems have appeared in *California Quarterly*, the *Bellingham Review*, and other journals.

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In Defense of the Two Cultures

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

NEXT YEAR WILL BE THE CENTENARY of Charles Darwin's death, and the occasion will, no doubt, be properly memorialized. But it will be a very different kind of occasion from that celebrated twenty-two years ago on the anniversary of the *Origin of Species*. In these two decades the advances in genetics, paleontology, embryology, molecular biology, and all the other sciences that are now thought to have a bearing on evolution—many of which did not even exist in Darwin's time—have made the theory of Darwinism ever more remote from anything Darwin would have recognized by that name. And if Darwinism, as we know it, has come a long way from its origins, the social theories derived from Darwinism have had an even more curious evolution. It is a situation another eminent Victorian, Lord Acton, would have appreciated. "Ideas," Acton wrote, "have a radiation and development, an ancestry and posterity of their own, in which men play the part of godfathers and godmothers more than that of legitimate parents."

The most familiar form of Social Darwinism is that espoused, not by Darwin, but by Herbert Spencer: the idea that natural selection functions, or should function, the same way in society that it functions in nature; that the struggle for existence is the precondition for the emergence of the socially fit as for the biologically fit; and that the best society is one that approximates a state of nature, that is least regulated, least governed, least controlled by extraneous forces or purposes—a laissez-faire society, in short.

This view of Social Darwinism is unsatisfactory on several counts. In equating a laissez-faire society with a Hobbesian state of nature, it suggests that the laws of the marketplace are nothing more than the laws of the jungle, and that the ethos of a commercial society is a barely veiled legitimization (sublimation, in the more sophisticated version of this theory) of violence. Nor is the alternative genealogy more satisfactory—that which derives Social Darwinism, not from Hobbes, but from Malthus. It is no accident, it is often said, that Darwin was inspired by that classic of laissez-faire, *An Essay on The Principle of Population*. But

✪ GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB is professor of history at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. She is the author of several books, including *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill*. This essay is adapted from a lecture originally delivered at Christ's College, Cambridge.

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in one sense it was an accident, and an ironic one, for Malthus's *Essay* contained an explicit denial of the theory of evolution. Refuting Smith's theory of progress as well as Godwin's theory of perfectibility, Malthus insisted that both were belied not only by the law of population but also by that law of nature which assured the fixity of species. Just as no amount of artificial breeding could produce a carnation the size of a cabbage or a sheep with a head so small as to be "evanescent," so no amount of social reform could alter the natural condition of man. Darwin did, to be sure, take his clue from the *Essay,* but it was only by turning Malthus on his head that he derived a theory of evolution from the Malthusian struggle for existence.

It is also curious that Darwinism should have appeared on the scene at precisely the time when laissez-faire had lost its original force. Even in the supposed heyday of laissez-faire, as Lionel Robbins and others have demonstrated, the doctrine was never as rigid and dogmatic as it is often made out to be. Certainly by the time Darwinism established itself as the dominant scientific theory—the new orthodoxy, as Huxley ruefully put it—England had accommodated herself to a pragmatic, conciliatory, reformist temper far removed from the ideological rigors of a Malthus or a Ricardo. Only in America, where Darwinism entered under the auspices of Herbert Spencer, did it take a laissez-faire form; in England, by yet another irony of intellectual history, Darwinism was invoked in support of eugenics, a system of controlled breeding designed to promote "national efficiency"—the very antithesis of laissez-faire.

If Darwinism, then, in England at any rate, did not inspire any upsurge of Social Darwinism in the familiar sense, neither did it inspire the religious crisis of faith often attributed to it. Long before Darwin, religious orthodoxy had been subverted by one intellectual current after another: by rationalism, naturalism, utilitarianism, biblical criticism, and a host of evolutionary theories dating back at least to Erasmus Darwin. Indeed, theories of evolution were becoming so commonplace in Darwin's own time that his great fear was not that his own theory would be attacked but that it would be anticipated by someone else (as, indeed, it very nearly was). In this intellectual atmosphere, the effect of the *Origin of Species* was not so much to produce a crisis of religious faith as to confirm and dramatize that crisis.

There was, however, a profound crisis produced by Darwinism, and it was one that struck at the heart of Victorian England. If the Victorians had no dogmatic social ideology, no binding religious faith, they did have a compelling, almost obsessive faith in morality. As revelation, ritual, and religious authority failed them, they clung all the more firmly to the most categorical of all imperatives: an inner law, a sense of rectitude

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inherent in man which was presumed to be a sufficient guide to private and public behavior, and which could be violated only at the risk of inviting a retribution as certain as any devised by church or state. George Eliot invoked this law when she spoke of a "binding belief or spiritual law, which is to lift us into willing obedience and save us from the slavery of unregulated passion or impulse." Pressed about the nature of that belief, in view of her avowed religious disbelief, she made her famous testament of faith: God is "inconceivable," immortality "unbelievable," but duty is nonetheless "peremptory and absolute."

These eminent Victorians who no longer believed in God believed all the more in man; they deified man, not, like Feuerbach, to "de-alienate" him, or, like Marx, to "socialize" him, but, like Comte, to moralize him. Their "Religion of Humanity" had only one dogma: that man was capable, by virtue of his distinctively human nature, of every higher impulse, every moral and spiritual quality, which had formerly required the inspiration and sanction of religion. This was also the function of the "intellectual clerisy" that Coleridge, and John Stuart Mill after him, made so much of: to propagate and transmit this secular faith to future generations for whom the conventional religious creeds would have become so attenuated as to be, finally, vitiated.

When George Eliot was asked to define her idea of duty, she said that it was the "recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life." What Darwinism did was to imperil that moral faith by making the "great central ganglion" of animal life the nerve center of human life as well. This was the traumatic effect of Darwinism: it did not so much displace God by man as displace man by nature, moral man by amoral nature. Malthusianism had earlier been accused of de-moralizing man, making him a creature of primitive biological needs, needs for sex and food that were beyond rational or moral control. But Darwinism de-moralized him further, by making him a creature of nature who had evolved, slowly and painfully, from the animal world, who still bore the traces of his origins, and was still subject to that process of evolution, the struggle for survival, which had made him what he was.

The *Origin of Species*, as contemporaries immediately recognized, contained within it the seeds of *The Descent of Man* published a dozen years later; and *The Descent of Man*, as was also recognized at the time, was exactly what its title said: an account of the *descent* of man—not, as some commentators would have it, the *ascent* of man. The book was, literally, reductivist, designed to demonstrate that the intellectual and spiritual faculties of human beings differed only in degree, not in kind, from those of animals. Thus language was interpreted as a more sophisticated

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form of animal cries and gestures. The moral sense (which John Stuart Mill had characterized as a uniquely human trait) became only another form of the "sociability" exhibited by animals. And the religious impulse, the sense of reverence and devotion, was said to be akin to the emotion displayed by Darwin's dog after Darwin had returned from his travels—in confirmation of which he quoted a German professor who had written that "a dog looks on his master as a god."

While some moralists rejected Darwinism out of hand, and others (Mill, for example) chose to belittle or ignore it, a few adopted the strategy devised earlier by Tennyson. Appalled by a nature "red in tooth and claw," Tennyson looked to evolution as the instrument for the redemption of man, the means by which man would rise above nature, would, as the famous lines went, "Move upward, working out the beast, / And let the ape and tiger die." Still others professed to find in nature a providential order that was as moral as the divine providence it replaced. This was the tactic taken at first by T. H. Huxley. In a remarkable letter written after the death of his young son, Huxley thanked Charles Kingsley for his expressions of condolence, but assured him that he had no need of the consolation of immortality since he was firmly convinced that the real world was as moral and just as the supposedly immortal world. "The wicked does *not* flourish, nor is the righteous punished. . . . The absolute justice of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact. The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun." Huxley reaffirmed that creed a quarter of a century later in his lecture, "Science and Morals." "The safety of morality lies neither in the adoption of this or that philosophical speculation, nor this or that theological creed, but in a real and living belief in that fixed order of nature which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses."

One suspects that by this time Huxley was desperately reasserting a faith he no longer believed, for only two years later he reversed himself, becoming the principal witness for the prosecution. Arguing against Spencer's version of Social Darwinism, the view that the struggle for existance was as essential to progress in society as in nature, Huxley pointed out that even in nature Darwinism did not preclude occasional regression, and that in human society even the assurance of eventual progress did not justify the suffering and sacrifice of one generation for the sake of another.

Having started this train of thought, Huxley could not let it go. During the last half-dozen years of his life he was as dogged in exposing the moral limitations of Darwinism as he had earlier been—and, indeed, as he still was—in defending its scientific validity. The most dramatic statement of his position appeared in his famous Romanes Lecture of 1893,

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"Evolution and Ethics," which might more properly have been called "Evolution *versus* Ethics." Had Huxley had before him the text of his earlier letter assuring Kingsley that "the wicked does *not* flourish, nor is the righteous punished," he could not now have repudiated that doctrine more precisely and deliberately. "If there is a generalization from the facts of life which has the assent of thoughtful men in every age and country, it is that the violator of ethical rules constantly escapes the punishment which he deserves; that the wicked flourishes like a green bay tree, while the righteous begs his bread; that the sins of the father are visited upon the children." His conclusion was equally stark. The evolutionary or "cosmic process," the process of struggle and selection, which had made the world what it was, had resulted in the survival of the "fittest" but not of the "best." "The ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it."

Under the terms of the Romanes lectureship, Huxley was enjoined from any discussion of politics. But he could not resist one reference to the "fanatical individualism" that sought to apply the principles of nature to society. Nor could he be prevented, the following year, from publishing a "Prolegomena" to his lecture in which he made it clear that his objection was not only to the "fanatical individualist" like Herbert Spencer, but also to the administrator, the socialist or eugenicist, who would take it upon himself to try to create an "earthly paradise, a true garden of Eden." That "pigeon-fancier's polity," Huxley suspected, was unattainable, but if it were attainable it would be a despotism as ruthless as any known to man, for it would require a vigilant battle against the instinct of self-assertion that was part of man's animal nature.

The effect, indeed the intention, of the "Prolegomena" was to enhance the paradox inherent in the lecture. The ethical process was required to counteract the evolutionary one, to restrain the combative instincts of man in the interests of society and morality. But to the degree to which the ethical process succeeded in that purpose, in impeding the operation of natural selection, it was debilitating to society and a deterrent to progress. It was this tragic paradox that made Huxley pronounce his lecture "a very orthodox discourse on the text, 'Satan, the Prince of this world.' "

Long before Huxley had come to that Manichaean conclusion, another kind of dualism had been advanced by the man who is often described as the codiscoverer of the theory of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace. When Huxley first read Darwin's theory, he said to himself, "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that." But one man had in fact thought of it and had even written a brief account of it. Wallace's

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place in the history of Darwinism has been a subject of much controversy. To what extent did he in fact anticipate Darwin's theory? Can his brief essay claim priority over the treatise Darwin had been working on for many years? Was there, as has recently been charged, a conspiracy and cover-up on the part of the scientific establishment to deprive Wallace of his just claim to fame? It is a dramatic story that all too easily lends itself to a spurious melodrama. It has also had the unfortunate effect of diverting us from what may be a more significant part of the story. For Wallace not only had the distinction of being the first Darwinist; he was also the first renegade Darwinist.

Even before Darwin had published his *Descent of Man*, Wallace was controverting that book by arguing that evolution could not account for the physical development of man's brain, still less for his moral capacity. In these respects man was unique, not part of the animal kingdom, not a product of the struggle for existence and natural selection. Wallace cited physiological and anthropological evidence in support of his contention, but he also had good political reasons to take the position he did. Long before he had become a scientist, he had been a socialist, and he remained that while he pursued his other passions: entomology chiefly, but also phrenology, spiritualism, and mesmerism. Where Huxley was initially attracted to the theory of evolution because it placed man firmly in the world of nature and made of him an "anthropoid ape," Wallace was attracted to it because it gave promise of elevating man above the world of nature and establishing his uniqueness and his superiority over the ape. Eventually both felt obliged to separate man from the evolutionary process: Huxley because he became convinced that man, in spite of his animal nature, had the ethical duty to suppress that nature, at least in part; Wallace because he was convinced that man's nature was qualitatively different from that of the animal, that man was naturally social, moral, cooperative, pacific—a natural socialist, in fact. From quite different perspectives, then, and for quite different reasons, Huxley and Wallace arrived at much the same point, a radical disjunction between nature and man, science and morality.

For Huxley, and for Wallace too, that disjunction was a measure of desperation, a strenuous attempt to keep Darwinism from being tainted by Social Darwinism, to preserve the scientific integrity of the theory without permitting it to encroach upon the domains of ethics and society. But there were other Victorians who had no need of such strategies: those like Herbert Spencer who found no moral dilemma in Social Darwinism, and those like Matthew Arnold who were so firmly ensconced in a pre-Darwinian universe that the problem never arose.

Arnold, one suspects—and I say this not derisively—had a mind so

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fine that no idea so gross as Darwinism could violate it. Long before the *Origin,* in a poem ironically entitled "In Harmony with Nature," he had disposed of the illusion that there could be any such harmony.

> . . . Man hath all which Nature hath, but more
> And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
> Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
> Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
> Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
>
> . . . Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
> Nature and man can never be fast friends.

In 1882, delivering the Rede Lecture at Cambridge, Arnold made it the occasion for an impassioned defense of humanistic education against those, like his good friend Huxley, who had been urging a predominantly scientific curriculum. Against Huxley's argument that "natural knowledge," scientific knowledge, was the basis of modern life and therefore essential for the mass of the people, Arnold insisted that it was precisely the masses who urgently required a humanistic education, an education which was not utilitarian in any vulgar sense but did serve the practical purpose of elevating the spirit above the mundane circumstances of life, enlarging the mind and life itself by putting us "into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty." The greatest of scientists might not require that stimulus; Darwin, he recalled, had confessed that he had no feeling for religion or poetry, that science and the domestic affections sufficed for him. But the Darwins of the world, Arnold suspected, were few. Most people needed art and poetry, religion and philosophy—"the best that has been thought and uttered in the world"—for the realization of their "true human perfection."

That Rede Lecture was in 1882, the year, as it happened, of Darwin's death. In 1959, at the time of another Darwinian anniversary, Lord Snow delivered another Rede Lecture to quite the opposite effect. This was, of course, the famous lecture on "The Two Cultures." Had Snow known of Arnold's lecture—he gave no indication that he did—he could not have controverted it more boldly. Decrying what he took to be the gulf separating the scientific and humanistic cultures, he made no secret of the fact that he held the "literary intellectuals" responsible for it. Parochial in their interests and complacent in their ignorance, they were guilty of an "intellectual Luddism" that was stultifying and disastrous, for it prevented any serious attempt to solve the most critical problem of the time: the growing disparity between the rich countries and the poor. That disparity could only be reduced by a new industrial revolution

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which would do for the poor nations what the old industrial revolution had done for the poor people of England. But a new industrial revolution required a commitment to the new scientific revolution that was taking place, unbeknownst to the literary intellectuals.

However deplorable the tone of the ensuing controversy (which, it must be said, was not Snow's doing), one cannot but be impressed by the passion generated by it, in America as well as in England, suggesting that Snow had hit a deep and sensitive nerve. Everything that could be said about that lecture has assuredly been said—except perhaps to comment on what Snow did *not* say. In all his talk about scientific revolutions he never mentioned that earlier and at least as momentous a revolution, Darwinism. This was all the more remarkable because he delivered his lecture at the very time the centenary of the *Origin of Species* was being celebrated. When Snow wanted to illustrate the ignorance of science on the part of the literary intellectuals, he cited their inability to define the second law of thermodynamics—the equivalent in literary terms, he said, of never having read a play by Shakespeare. He later regretted that example. He thought it sounded comic, was too easily parodied; he would have done better to have taken as his example molecular biology. But even then, Snow did not choose the theory of evolution as his example—perhaps because he realized that literary intellectuals knew something of that theory, knew enough to be skeptical of its application to social and political affairs, knew not only something of the difficulty of applying it, but of the ambiguous, even dangerous, effects of its application.

If Snow paid no heed either to Darwin or to Arnold, it was perhaps because his own intellectual universe was curiously pre-Victorian. Whatever else one may say about the intellectual habits of the Victorians—their penchant for large categories and bold antitheses: man and nature, morality and science, reason and faith—one cannot charge them (although they have, of course, been so charged) with complacency or undue optimism. On the contrary, some of the most eminent, and certainly the most interesting, of them came to their affirmations by way of doubt and fear; in this respect they were the very model of the modern existentialist. Snow was rather in the tradition of the Enlightenment, which took a more benign view of nature and reason, and which conceived of progress in linear rather than dialectical terms, proceeding not by conflict and negation but by the steady, cumulative advance of knowledge and the steady, cumulative application of knowledge. Unlike Huxley, who was always fighting a battle on two fronts—against those who denied the truths of science as well as against those who denied all other truths, against the "fanatical individualists" who brooked no interference in the free market of society and the administrators who were all too ea-

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ger to refashion society according to their own designs—Snow had a monolithic view both of the social problem and of the solution to that problem.

The recent emergence of a new form of Social Darwinism has brought with it a renewal of the Two Cultures debate, the latest version being even more ill-natured than the earlier ones. Again one is reminded of the Victorians, who were no mean polemicists, the disputes between Freeman and Froude, Kingsley and Newman, presaging some of the more notorious academic feuds of our time. But considering the momentousness of the issue, the original Darwinian debate was far less acrimonious than might have been expected, certainly less so than the current controversy over Sociobiology. The highlight of that earlier debate was the famous meeting of the British Association at Oxford in 1860, when Bishop Wilberforce asked whether it was from his grandfather or grandmother that Huxley traced his descent from an ape, and Huxley retorted that there was nothing shameful about having an ape for a grandfather; what was shameful was a man who stooped to such cheap rhetoric. At that point, we are told, students leapt from their seats and shouted, and one lady fainted and had to be carried out. One wonders what those Victorians would have made of a meeting a few years ago of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, when Edward Wilson, professor at Harvard and the leading proponent of Sociobiology, was greeted with shouts of "Fascist," "Nazi," "Racist," "Sexist," and with a bucket of water thrown over his head.

By now even the most benighted of Snow's "literary intellectuals" must be familiar with the basic tenets of Sociobiology: human emotions and ethical ideas and practices have been programmed to a substantial degree by natural selection over thousands of generations. These emotions, ideas, and practices have evolved and been incorporated into our genetic constitution; and those traits—altruism, for example—which seem to contradict the self-serving, self-preserving function of natural selection, can be understood as a kind of higher selfishness, a form of kin selection only once removed from the more familiar kind of natural selection.

Because Sociobiology is so firmly rooted both in natural selection and in genetics—because, as the very term suggests, it purports to describe social behavior in terms of biology—it is obviously open to the charge of being materialistic and deterministic. Indeed Wilson himself speaks of it as a form of "scientific materialism." Yet it is ironic to find this charge so heatedly made by those who proudly subscribe to other forms of materialism and determinism: historical materialism and environmental determinism. It is also ironic that those who accuse the Sociobiologists of

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being politically inspired are themselves frankly political, a group of them, including some eminent professors at Harvard and their graduate students, having formed an organization called the Sociobiology Study Group of Science for the People, which issues the kind of manifestos and collective letters appropriate to a political sect. One of those public letters accused the Sociobiologists of providing a "genetic justification of the status quo," and of reviving the doctrine that had led to sterilization laws in the United States and to the gas chambers of Nazi Germany.

Protesting against these "vigilante" tactics, as he calls them, Wilson insists that it is not he but his critics who are reductivist, that his theory does not equate the genetic *is* with the ethical *ought*, if only because the two are presumed to be constantly evolving in response to changing conditions. So far from licensing the old kind of Social Darwinism, he has gone to great pains to establish a biological basis for altruism and ethical behavior. At times he seems to suggest that Sociobiology is not meant to provide a biological *basis* for behavior but only to establish its biological *limits*—limits within which individuals, groups, and societies have a large range of freedom for ethical choices, but beyond which they cannot go without violating their basic natures and ultimately destroying themselves. If this modest interpretation is accepted, Sociobiology becomes, not an assertion of biological or genetic determinism, but rather a refutation of social or environmental determinism, a denial that human beings are infinitely malleable and can be totally refashioned by changes in the environment, education, or social system.

This modest reading of Sociobiology may be taken as a defense of the individual not only against any systematic attempt to reprogram him but against the more insidious pressures of society and culture. Wilson quotes Lionel Trilling's memorable defense of Freud, in which the biological basis of Freud's thought, the idea of a biological "given," so far from being repressive, as is commonly supposed, was represented by Trilling as a liberating idea—liberating because it prevented man from being overwhelmed by an otherwise pervasive and omnipotent culture. "Somewhere in the child," Trilling wrote, "somewhere in the adult, there is a hard, irreducible, stubborn core of biological urgency, and biological necessity, and biological reason, that culture cannot reach, and that reserves the right, which sooner or later it will exercise, to judge the culture and resist and revise it."

But just as Freud, it may be argued, pushed his biological given beyond that limited and limiting role, so that it was not simply a deterrent to the usurpations of society and culture but was a usurper in its own right, a determinism as powerful as any other, so Wilson has larger designs than he sometimes suggests. When he says that Sociobiology has finally reconciled the Two Cultures in the "blending of biology and the

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social sciences," he is obviously misstating the issue. It is not science and social science that are the antagonists of the Two Cultures debate, but science and the humanities. The social sciences are all too easily "scientized." The great source of resistance to science, as Snow recognized, is the humanistic culture, which will hardly be reassured by some of Wilson's assertions, such as that "ethical philosophy must not be left in the hands of the merely wise," or that "the time has come for ethics to be removed temporarily from the hands of the philosophers and biologicized." The fact is that Wilson, like Snow before him, does not want to reconcile science and ethics; he wants to subordinate ethics to science, to put ethics into the "hands," as he says, of the biologists.

Wilson and Snow are on the same side of the great divide, both champions of science against what they take to be the illusions, obfuscations, or plain ignorance of nonscientists. But politically, programmatically, they are on opposite sides. Snow assumed that if only scientists were given their head, if only they occupied their rightful place in the culture, the urgent social problems of the world could be solved. When he later said that he should have used, as an example of the egregious ignorance of humanists, molecular biology rather than the second law of thermodynamics, he could not have known that within a dozen years it would be molecular biology that would inspire Sociobiology, and that the Sociobiologist would prove to be a far more formidable opponent to his program of reform than the old-fashioned humanist.

Snow had assumed that science, by virtue of its sheer intellectual energy and creativity, would unleash an enormous force for good in the world. What Wilson did was to make of science itself a decisive check upon that force. Like the Malthusian checks on population, or the "iron laws" of Ricardian economics, so Wilson's genetics sets limits to social change. "The genes," he writes, "hold culture on a leash." Where Snow's image of the scientist recalls the classical *conquistador*—audacious, fearless, seeking new worlds to conquer—Wilson's is reminiscent of the *bourgeois gentilhomme*—grateful to civilization (and evolution) for the goods it has bestowed on him, cautiously adding to his estate but never jeopardizing it by any rash speculation. This is hardly the fascist the "People's" scientists have made him out to be, but still far from the brave adventurer Snow would have liked him to be.

Wilson's is only one of many signals sent out recently by scientists suggesting a retreat from the brave new world Snow had envisaged. Almost every literary season produces another book and another thesis citing new scientific (or pseudoscientific) reasons for retrenchment and constraint: zero population growth, zero economic growth, zero energy growth—the last, ironically, a presumed consequence of that law of ther-

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modynamics which Snow had made a symbol of the scientific imagination. But the most ominous of the new scientific pessimisms is the retreat from science itself—what might be called "zero scientific growth."

One scientist commented on the Sociobiology controversy: "The real question, the question that gives the debate its emotional power, is: *do we really want to know?*" The "we" in that quotation refers not to humanists but to scientists themselves. And that question has been raised not only in connection with Sociobiology but with other subjects of scientific inquiry touching upon race, sex, intelligence, even class. One recalls earlier qualms about atomic research. But then it was nothing less than the destruction of the world that was feared; now it is knowledge about the world we have long inhabited and have long sought to understand.

If some scientists are fearful of what they might learn from science, if they are no longer certain they *want* to know what they can know, the reason may be that they are burdened with too heavy a responsibility. They no longer think it their duty to know all they can know. They now feel called upon to anticipate and judge the social and ethical consequences of their knowledge. It is as if they alone were the repositors of practical knowledge; as if there were no philosophers to speak to questions of ethics, or political philosophers (and, indeed, politicians) to politics; as if there were no historians, economists, theologians, poets, and artists to address other human and social concerns.

"*Do we really want to know?*" Snow—and Huxley, and Arnold too—would have regarded that question as the ultimate *trahison des clercs*, an unforgivable failure of nerve, a know-nothingness far worse than anything with which the humanist could ever be charged. This failure of nerve comes not from the hubris of humanists or their refusal to accredit the culture of science, but from the unwitting hubris of scientists, from their assumption that the salvation of the world—or its damnation—rests upon themselves alone, that, as Snow remarked not once but twice in the course of his lecture, "the scientists have the future in their bones." That remark must have sent a chill down the spines of those of his own generation who recalled other occasions when intrepid voyagers into the new worlds of fascism and communism discovered there the "wave of the future," the "future that works."

The final irony is that just at this time, when the scientific culture seems to be torn by dissension and self-doubt, when the humanists might be forgiven some small expression of Schadenfreude, they themselves—or at least the most articulate of them, who pride themselves on being at the "cutting edge" of their disciplines—have chosen to capitulate. That capitulation started a long time ago, when modernism first afflicted the

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arts, and when philosophy, the "mother of all the arts," modernized and "scientized" itself. Since then we have witnessed the attempt of political philosophy to transform itself into political science, history into social science, literary criticism into semiotics, and, most recently, theology into semantics. In each case the effect has been to "de-construct" those disciplines, to desocialize, dehumanize, demoralize them by stripping them of any recognizable social and human reality. It is as if some humanists have decided that they too do not "really want to know" those truths about reality which they once thought it their most important mission to know.

This is the latest, most aggressive—and, one might argue, regressive—phase in this history. It is an effort to unite the Two Cultures analytically and linguistically, to create a language of discourse so recondite and internal, so concerned with the mode of discourse itself, that other modes of experience—history and politics, conduct and sensibility—are but dimly perceived as through a glass darkly. If the history of this controversy teaches us anything at all, it is that this strategy, too, will fail, that reality will reassert itself, and that the culture—or two cultures—will once again assume the task, however imperfectly and inconclusively, of interpreting reality.

Reviewing this checkered history, even the most unregenerate modernist might find himself looking back, with something more than nostalgia, to those Victorians who addressed themselves so forthrightly to their condition, who tried to salvage a sense of duty—a "peremptory and absolute Duty" at that—from a world deprived of the traditional supports for duty, who tried to create an ethic that trod a fine line between defying nature and acquiescing in the imperatives of nature. They were as sensible as we are of the unsatisfactory dualism of two cultures representing different modes of experience and knowledge. But they took refuge in that dualism, suspecting that the alternative was nothing less than nihilism—the "abolition of man," in C. S. Lewis's memorable phrase.

The Victorian ethos which managed to sustain that precarious balance is, to be sure, irrecoverable, largely because the evangelical impulse from which it derived is irrevocably lost. But the memory of it, the history of it, is not lost. And that memory, of a culture living on sheer nerve and will, the nerve to know the worst and to will the best, may fortify us as we persist in our quest for some new synthesis that will herald some brave—or not so brave—new world.

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Essay to a Friend in Love With the Wrong Man Again

STEPHEN DUNN

It was never meant to be sensible,
fully understandable. The digger wasp,
for example, goes up to the tarantula
like a friend and the tarantula freezes,
allows itself to be inspected.
Then it digs the tarantula's grave
while the tarantula watches. You, I bet,
would have guessed with a name
like *tarantula*, the tarantula would've been
the villain. But it is we who named
the tarantula and made the digger wasp
sound honest, hardworking.
And, of course, there is no villain,
only the scheme of things, only horror,
and occasionally the strange birth
of a butterfly and its short, gorgeous,
utterly careless season.
I should have mentioned the digger wasp
doesn't kill its victim, but stuns it,
drags it to the grave, lays one egg
on its stomach, and closes up.
You see, the instinct is maternal.
The newborn wasp feeds
off the tarantula for weeks,
digs itself out at the right time
and enters the odd, wonderful world.
I've no advice for you, my friend.
You, who would take it—
as all of us would—and offer it
up to the heart, like a sacrifice.

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An Anthropologist Without a Tribe
A Memoir

HAROLD ORLANS

IF A "CAREER" IS A SERIES OF JOBS OR TASKS arranged in a discernible professional, intellectual, or personal direction, I don't feel that I have had one. Certainly, accident and circumstance have outweighed conscious design in determining what I have done; my inquiries and applications have failed far more often than they have succeeded. Contrariwise, I have dismissed, out of hand, excellent opportunities (for example, to work with David Riesman on what became *The Lonely Crowd* or to apply for a faculty position at Princeton) for reasons that now seem inadequate or idiotic.

In retrospect, the line of a "career" nonetheless emerges like the moist trail of a snail across a stone. Retrospective impressions, however, are grossly deceptive. We record or retain in memory the faintest fraction of the events and information, ideas, feelings, and little choices that fill our days. From this highly selective repository, biographical or historical accounts make a further selection of resolved events that were unsettled at the time. As the historian cannot erase his knowledge of matters his subjects never knew, he renders their lives more meaningful and dramatic than they were. But then the search for, evocation, and installation of meaning in a meaningless universe is one function of the intellectual and one definition of man.

I first encountered anthropology at the City College of New York in Morris Raphael Cohen's advanced course, The Philosophy of Civilization, which I took as an upper freshman in September 1937, by special dispensation of Dean Gottschall, before I had had introductory philosophy. This, the last course that Cohen gave at City before his retirement in January 1938, was a phenomenal experience, never subsequently duplicated in my education. Cohen taught from a breadth of learning in philosophy, history, science, and social science; he placed man, society, and intellectual activity in sweeping historical and cultural

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perspectives; and he set a commanding standard of scholarship, intelligence, and hypercritical analysis that no other teacher I have had approached.

Recently, in *Morris R. Cohen and the Scientific Ideal,* David Hollinger put Cohen in his modest place in American philosophy. In a similar way, one by one, the heroes of my youth have been clipped and shorn of wonder. I recognize each disillusionment and then reject it just as I reject the lines of age in a face I have loved since it was young. (Why did my father grow his side hair long, comb it across his bald head, and paste it down with hard brown soap? Because, I imagine, having seen hair there for many years, he went on seeing it.)

My classmates at City—including Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky, Seymour Lipset, Seymour Melman, and others more notable then than now—fought and taught each other in intense sectarian socialist squabbles in the "Kremlin," a corner of the arched basement alcoves where Ping-Pong and politics raged. First-generation, Great Depression children of turn-of-the-century Jewish immigrants, we took intellectual matters with the utmost seriousness. Precocious and parochial, interested in politics and contemporary affairs, many of us went into journalism, starting as writers, editors, and instant social and political analysts for student publications.

Social scientists, who scorn journalism, do not realize how much they might learn from it. The "who, what, when, where, and why"—especially the "who, when, and where"—that the fledgling reporter presents at the beginning of a story are often overlooked in social science reports that exist in a timeless void peopled by subjects whose behavior is governed solely by factors noted in abstract, often artificially quantified, form. The ability to write in a way that an educated person can understand, and even enjoy, is an art that more journalists than social scientists cultivate. Social scientists invite and accept hearsay testimony and treat all responses as equally weighty and honest, whereas the good reporter, like the lawyer and historian, distinguishes hearsay from direct testimony and regards his sources as partial, self-interested, and, it may be, deliberately misleading. The truth, lost in the receding past, can never be fully recovered but may be approximated by the critical and imaginative reconciliation of evidence.

Although the recent employment outlook has been bad, it is less grim than it was in the thirties. Ironically, one reason we took college so seriously was that it appeared unlikely or uncertain that we would get any practical benefit from it. Anti-Semitism limited appointments, especially in the institutions and fields of study (philosophy, English, history, and the social sciences) that deemed themselves guardians of the nation's cultural heritage. The gross or subtle obstacles to the appointment of Jewish

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professors were not overcome until the vast expansion of higher education after World War II. Morris Cohen's career was limited by anti-Semitism. Despite the preeminence of Boas, whose move from Germany was influenced by the more favorable prospects he saw for a Jew in America, appointments were often governed by social and religious considerations—Edward Sapir's 1931 appointment was the first to break that barrier at Yale.

The federal civil service, hiring on merit, was a haven from discrimination; several friends and I took the examination for proofreader at the Government Printing Office, as well-paid and secure a position as we aspired to. My first job upon graduation in February 1941 was as an office boy at Macfadden Publications (publisher of *Liberty*, *True Story*, and other successful bilge) in New York, which I got after lying about the question on religion at a Christian-only employment agency. My main responsibilities were sorting mail and delivering coffee to the editors; my main interest, the pitiful letters of confession that readers submitted for publication.

My introduction to the Christian world, begun with the help of City psychology professor John Peatman in the summer of 1940 at a Quaker work camp at Penn-Craft in southwest Pennsylvania, led me the following summer to a second camp at Mountain View, California. That fall, I resumed my career as a copyboy and then reporter for the Hearst San Francisco *Call-Bulletin*, which, despite its politics and moderate sensationalism, was a thoroughly professional paper whose city editor, Charles Walker, taught me a lot about journalism. It was an exciting job for a boy of twenty. But then the war broke out and I was uncomfortable covering stories at military bases and the homes of dead heroes. Having applied for conscientious-objector status in the draft, I returned to New York to face my draft board.

While the draft hearings and an appeal dragged on for over a year, I was desultorily employed as an editor at Social Analysis, an organization made up of a group of former college friends based on several eastern campuses, whose stated purpose was "to apply the techniques of social anthropology to studies of the contemporary American scene." Our mentor, Zellig Harris of the University of Pennsylvania linguistics department, drew our attention to the work of Mass-Observation in England, which, founded in 1937 by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge and maintaining in its early years of academic respectability an association with Malinowski and other academic dignitaries, employed participant observation in minute, lively studies of class-ridden British life. Mass-Observation also made use of a national panel of respondents who submitted detailed replies to periodic questions. Our attempt to establish a similar panel of friends in eastern cities and college towns yielded a con-

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siderable volume of observations and reactions to the sudden death of President Franklin Roosevelt that, together with extensive newspaper accounts, provided the basis of my first proper professional paper.

After a full field investigation by the FBI, I was eventually classified as a conscientious objector and sent off to plant trees in northwest Pennsylvania and chop them down on the eastern shore of Maryland. The few anthropology books in the camp library and others that friends supplied, though rather dull and scholarly, stirred a sense of romance and discovery: beneath those curious generalizations about strange peoples, surely important truths about our own people must lie. When the camp closed in the fall of 1944, many of us applied for transfer to units near universities. I picked Connecticut State Hospital in Middletown, because of its proximity to Yale.

Working as an attendant at a mental hospital was a powerful education in medical practice, malpractice, and sloth; in hierarchy, discipline, and domination; in self-torment, affliction, misery, and death; and in the possibilities and limitations, the value and futility of compassion. I had been fearful of what madmen might do, but they were far more likely to hurt themselves than us. With wrists and ankles tied with sheets to the four corners of the bed, a man could still bash his head back against the metal headrail. One patient committed suicide by butchering his wrists and ripping off his penis with a broken feeding cup; for a moment, the doctor held the pitiful limp piece of flesh aloft with his tweezers.

It was easy to keep order and put down the rare outburst of violence. I saw a dozen patients die of delirium tremens, syphilis, cancer, bed sores, gangrene, and debilitation. After a year, in which I changed from a solicitous to an efficient attendant, I came to think of and write about the hospital as a kind of American death camp. However, I heartily recommend a hospital night shift to anyone who wants to work his way through school. The quiet night is ideal for study and the massed sleeping bodies impart a sense of mastery and responsibility that strengthen the student's confidence.

The Institute of Human Relations, whose pioneering interdisciplinary publications had led me to Yale, might have helped some faculty researchers but was imperceptible to graduate students. Later, a number of us got together for interdisciplinary discussions that the university did little to promote. The anthropology department discouraged enrollment in other courses—I managed to take only two in sociology. In other respects, the department, or that fraction present at the time (mainly Wendell Bennett, Cornelius Osgood, and Irving Rouse—George Murdock and Clellan Ford were away on war duties), was considerate and helpful in arranging the two-hour graduate seminars on Tuesdays, the one day I was off duty at Middletown, and Roland Bainton kindly let

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me sleep in his office at the Divinity School. Perhaps eight students were around during the war; even in the postwar bulge only twenty were admitted to six or more faculty members. When my classmate was absent I spent two hours in solitary conversation with Osgood in a course on museum methods.

The department was bitterly and physically divided between the museum contingent at Peabody and Hillhouse and those with offices at the Institute across town in the medical complex. Murdock's interests were closest to mine, but I could not share his equating arbitrary quantification with scientific rigor: he once advised a Senate committee to conduct a "scientific" poll in Europe before deciding whether to accept the Marshall Plan. I have a properly scientific hypothesis that most of those who believe in social "science" are simpleminded or methodical men who think that others are no more complicated than they. They bring to mind Turgenev's comment that

> the people who bind themselves to systems are those who are unable to encompass the whole truth and try to catch it by the tail; a system is like the tail of truth, but truth is like a lizard: it leaves its tail in your fingers and runs away, knowing full well that it will grow a new one in a twinkling.

Though specializing in Peruvian archaeology, Wendell Bennett was a man of broad interests. By far the best teacher in the department, his warmth and diplomacy held the hostile factions together and made him a welcome spokesman for anthropology in Washington and the Social Science Research Council. I was glad to have him as my thesis adviser. By accident, I saw something of his home life and was troubled at how much he drank. Now, drinking as much, I understand better. Alcohol can dull the sharp edge of fate.

Bennett helped me get a research appointment to study Burnsville, a village in the North Carolina mountains, under the direction of John Gillin at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. When that study collapsed (I came down with jaundice and foolishly provoked a row with Gillin), Bennett persuaded the department to break precedent and accept as my dissertation topic an appraisal of anthropological studies of literate communities based solely on library sources. Bennett also suggested applying for a Social Science Research Council fellowship, which I got in 1948, to do an "anthropological" study of an English community.

My opinion of the scientific status and prospects of the social sciences peaked in graduate school. The usefulness of anthropological theory and method for the understanding of contemporary society was tested in my dissertation and subsequent fieldwork in England—and found wanting.

How, among all English villages and towns, do you choose one for study? After three months' cogitation, consultations, inspections, and

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procrastination, scholarly and personal convenience finally led me to Stevenage. This was a town of 6,500 located thirty miles north of London which was designated as the first in a series of new and expanded towns that were to be built in postwar Britain. The "social development officer" of the government new town corporation was Charles Madge, the poet and cofounder of Mass-Observation, who had collected much information on the old town and could provide helpful introductions, advice, and encouragement. And, truth to tell, my wife did not want to leave London, and I did not want to leave her.

I set about the study with enthusiasm tempered by a burgeoning sense of inadequacy. The English were anything but primitive: indeed, there was good reason to consider them more civilized than us. Herbert Spencer tells of a Frenchman "who, having been three weeks here, proposed to write a book on England; who, after three months, found that he was not quite ready; and who, after three years, concluded that he knew nothing about it." In sum, that was my experience.

British "culture" was a superfluity of strange, compelling conventions. Yet the strangeness soon gave way to familiarity and the sense of compulsive repetitiveness to one of subtle or gross or thoughtless variations on themes which could all be altered, but not simultaneously or instantaneously. Were the round, red postboxes, the left-hand rule of the road, the teapot ceremony, warm beer, and open, coal-burning fires—each with an identifiable history and less identifiable future of its own—enduring or changing conventions? (Today, the postboxes and left-hand rule remain, the warm beer and open fires have gone, and the once ridiculed tea bag is catching on.)

To depict contemporary culture in a way that reflected the past emergence and possible future development of its countless components was a prodigious undertaking. Yet to ignore its history—even recent history known to every English adult—was to court disaster. It was difficult to distinguish an ancient practice from a passing measure of postwar austerity, the degree to which a practice was dispensable or embedded in the lives of different classes, or whether it was distinctively local, English, British, or European. The changeless forms of ethnography, like dusty museum tableaux, represented a few observations ethnographers had made during their brief encounters with strange peoples, presented in ignorance of all the observations they did not make or use. That little knowledge and vast ignorance informed and entertained Western readers who knew nothing else about the subject: but what if the people being studied were English and the readers eminent English scholars?

Such thoughts led me gradually to shift my focus from a study of English culture and class in the old Stevenage to an analysis of the social objectives of the new town planners and the local opposition they

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aroused. With further experience and judicious attention to historical, social, political, and economic factors, a respectable study of an English community could no doubt be conducted, but I was not then prepared to conduct one. (A number have since been completed.)

When I did finish the study, I sought to remain in England. Some years later, the effort to renovate Britain—to rationalize production, raise living standards, expand higher education, and increase economic and social opportunity—produced a boom in the social sciences; but in the 1950s, as again today, academic jobs were scarce. Raymond Firth at the London School of Economics, with whom I had taken a seminar, referred me to the Social Survey, a government agency which conducted surveys for government departments. An anthropologist on the staff had just left and Louis Moss, the director, readily accepted me as his replacement. He sought thereby to broaden the Survey's scope and, perhaps, to increase its academic respectability. In neither respect was he successful. The conservatism of the British civil service has to this day confined the Survey to the same kind of statistical reports as in 1951–52. I did not broaden its methods, but it broadened mine.

Churchill's return to power in October 1951 led to government economies that obliged me to leave the Survey. I failed to get a research appointment at the Rhodes-Livingston Institute in Northern Rhodesia. Max Gluckman at Manchester, who made that decision, struck me as a sophisticated Murdock, and I doubtless struck him as insufficiently devout. His class at Manchester enjoyed my irreverence, but at his home that evening, I stupidly got into a heated argument with his wife (whom I took to be a fellow traveler), who charged that Tolstoy was a class enemy of the peasants.

I returned to the States in 1952 and, declining a position at Bennington, where my wife would not go, took one at the Institute for Research in Human Relations in Philadelphia, a small nonprofit institute founded and staffed by social psychologists. Again, my function was to broaden their research competence and thereby help to gain additional grants. Anthropological insights were considered helpful, especially in work with foreign students and the local Puerto Rican population; but the questions that government sponsors asked usually had to be answered by survey methods.

On a September evening in 1953 Wendell Bennett and his wife Hope were at the Blue Mailbox Beach on Martha's Vineyard (now owned by Robert McNamara, with guards posted to keep the public out). The surf was heavy from an approaching storm and Bennett, a strong swimmer, waded in to fetch their twelve-year-old daughter, Martha. Three days later, his body was washed ashore. He had had an ill-timed heart attack.

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This event, more than any other, served to remove me from the profession. In 1952, Bennett had been president of the American Anthropological Association. I revisited Yale in the fall and, in the course of the year, matters of mutual personal and professional interest arose (he once asked if I would like to be editor of the *American Anthropologist* which, I imagine, meant that my name went on a short list of candidates). After Bennett's death, I saw Osgood several times, met occasionally with friends from Yale, and periodically attended professional meetings. But the profession seemed dominated by traditional academic concerns and my interest waned until, in the late 1950s, I dropped my membership in both the AAA and the Anthropological Society of Washington.

In 1954, when the Institute in Philadelphia lost a large government contract, I had to find another job. We had had a succession of Antioch girls in residence there as research assistants. At a party given by the current student, I sat beside a boy (William Gamson, if memory serves) who turned out to be an Antioch student working temporarily at the National Science Foundation. "Do you have any jobs going?" I asked. He said yes, and a month later I was working at the Foundation in the unit responsible for surveys and studies of scientific research and development expenditures, personnel, and policies.

That was the critical job in settling my wavering career. Until then I had been unwilling or unable to pursue any interest very long; each—attitudes toward death, infant care, community studies, the social aspects of town planning—was taken up, written up, and dropped. At the Foundation, I developed a more lasting interest in government policy toward science and higher education and in the mechanics and purposes of government, an expression of an abiding fascination with the nature of power and will that I have never either adequately satisfied or understood.

Initially I was impressed by the corporate, almost medieval character of government work, to which many persons contributed without anyone receiving exclusive credit. Subsequently I noted the external constituencies and internal factions contending for funds; the forces restraining or stimulating expenditures; the words and data carefully selected to serve special interests; and the avenues through which these interests were pursued by the Executive Office, the Congress, the academic community, the press, and the public. Stendhal helped me to recognize and tolerate (though I seldom enjoyed) bureaucratic and political maneuvering. Not that the scientists, deans, and university presidents who came to Washington as self-righteous as the Daughters of the American Revolution were very skillful at it: a colleague remarked that the motto "Through These Doors Walk the Most Arrogant of Men" should be placed above the entrance to the National Science Board room.

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For five years such impressions of the self-interest of men supposedly concerned with the pursuit of knowledge cumulated with little outlet. Policy reports and pronouncements were strictly controlled by the office of the director, Alan Waterman, which usually meant by scientists, lawyers, and administrators who knew less than a distracted freshman about social science methodology. They unhesitatingly displayed their ignorance in single-minded advocacy of larger research expenditures. The function of our surveys was to bolster their advocacy.

In 1959 I left the National Science Foundation to become director of studies for the White House Conference on Children and Youth, a madcap decennial affair. I supervised a staff of over thirty people, a few paid by the Conference, but mostly volunteers contributed by private and public agencies eager to draft sections of reports that they could later quote to advance their causes. The first two weeks I spent honeymooning on Martha's Vineyard with my second wife, as there would be no time for a holiday once I started. That suited Eli Ginzberg, chairman of the Conference study committee, just fine, and since he spent his summers on the island, we had a chance to work together before I returned to Washington.

When the Conference was finally held, several thousand people sat in five large hotels and talked for five solid days. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, doctors, psychologists, teachers, and nurses, social workers and social scientists, policemen and students fenced and parried, confessed and urged, bargained and bridged the gulfs dividing their faiths and professions. A thousand recommendations were adopted which, if implemented, would have absorbed the entire gross national product. Something may have been accomplished, but I cannot say what.

Thereafter, on September 1, 1960, I moved to the Brookings Institution, newly installed in its functional but stolid quarters on Massachusetts Avenue. (I remember the date well because I went to work in the morning and took off that afternoon for the Washington Hospital Center, where our son Andrew was born.) That first year was the most productive of the thirteen I spent at Brookings. I visited twenty universities and colleges, picked the names of 6,500 faculty members who were to be surveyed, read some 3,500 completed questionnaires, and corresponded with many respondents who offered extensive comments. And I disgorged the National Science Foundation experience in a good chubby book entitled *The Effects of Federal Programs on Higher Education.*

My passage from the temporary to the permanent staff on regular yearly appointments at Brookings was earned by undertaking to salvage a botched survey of federal agency libraries. As Librarian of Congress and then director of UNESCO, Luther Evans had great experience at managing large cultural enterprises. But he, or the staff to whom he

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delegated the chore, did not know how to conduct a survey and George Graham, the Brookings director of governmental studies, was unable to forestall disaster. Only a few tables could be extracted from the messy hand tabulations. We held a conference on federal library affairs; I summarized the discussion, and Evans prepared a paper. Thus we pieced together a publication to discharge our obligation to the Council on Library Resources, which had financed the survey. The small printing was distributed largely for free and I do not think it was even included in the Brookings publication list.

Thereafter I did a study of the Atomic Energy Commission, which enabled me to visit Commission laboratories and facilities across the country. The book was favorably reviewed and won an award, but John Conway, a former staff director of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, attacked the use of anonymous quotations as unscholarly and "McCarthyite." That criticism points up a central dilemma of applied and policy research into named organizations and programs. The social science principle of anonymity conflicts with the obligation, in history and law, to identify sources; policy research is caught in the middle. Confidentiality encourages both candor and irresponsibility. The situation in an interview, when a person may express his opinions freely and without penalty, is quite different from that in public affairs where he must go on record and take the consequences. Hence policy recommendations based on confidential interviews can prove unrealistic if one thing is said in private and another in public.

Brookings was not inclined toward such reflections. The staff was confident, some might say arrogant (besides, too much introspection interferes with work). But confidence reflects character, not validity. Many a brave man has walked confidently to the scaffold. Brookings has confidently published and then withdrawn a book after discovering that parts were plagiarized. Many economists who, like the rest of us, have been unable to comprehend the economy, remain, nonetheless, sublimely self-confident.

The Friday luncheon conversation in the walnut-panelled, round-table room at Brookings was exclusively pragmatic: What should or would be done about X?; Why had A said or done Z? The horizon in general conversation was seldom more than three months and, in books, three years. The word "policy" was repeated as often as a blind man swings his cane before him. Yet, wherever you searched for government policy, you discovered that there was none. In science, education, welfare, nutrition, energy, health, and social services the situation was always the same: there was no consistent, comprehensive policy, but instead many inconsistent, spotty policies. Each arena had its own constituencies, programs, and statutes, usually as unclear and internally

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contradictory as the policies under which they were administered. How could any, or all, of those orderly academic theories explain the disorder of government?

Institutionally, Brookings was a benevolent despotism. There was no internal faculty politics because there was no faculty. Half a dozen staff members held tenured appointments, backed by income from an endowment; the rest were on renewable yearly or fixed-term project appointments. Power was held by the president and division directors, who rose and fell in favor. The endowment of $30–50 million brought too little independence of spirit. Brookings's touted influence was obtained by espousing emergent trends. Advisory committees were followed by reading committees, revision followed revision, and manuscripts then languished on president Kermit Gordon's desk. When finally cleared, they often read, as a *New Republic* reviewer put it, "as if . . . written by a committee typing with mittens." In one case, when Gordon rejected and then approved a manuscript with changes he had made in the text, he later asked to compare the corrected text with the proofs. The author, a brash young economist who shortly thereafter left for a university post, replied that he had thrown it out.

After four Brookings books and a fifth, *The Nonprofit Research Institute*, written for Clark Kerr's Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, my luck ran out. Gordon had required me to go on leave for the Carnegie work in order to avoid a conflict of interest, but I felt a greater conflict in writing my next book on the government's use of social science research. How could I criticize the apolitical posture and scientific pretensions of social scientists without implicitly or explicitly criticizing many Brookings economists?

The book went slowly, which is usually a bad sign. Four anonymous readers castigated it as unempirical, superficial, overly critical, and "less a piece of research than an exercise in self-expression." The fifth said it was "by all odds the best book on the policy sciences that I have read." Reflective books by Alice Rivlin, Charles Schultze, and Arthur Okun were permissible so long as they were positive about the value of policy analysis in resolving national problems; but the contention that political and social bias was as necessary as breath to intellectuals was inadmissible. I thought it futile to contest such a strong verdict and resigned myself to leaving.

As time went by, I came to feel that no distinction had been made between the judgment of a manuscript and that of a man. Since I had never, in fact, been told why I was being—politely and leisurely, but unmistakably—fired, I wrote to Gordon that "I believe that I am being punished for my opinions" and requested a hearing. This he denied. I repeated the request in a second letter stating:

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By refusing a hearing, you leave unexamined the charge that I have been punished for my opinions—especially the opinion, which you acknowledge disagreeing with, that there is an inescapable political element or bias in supposedly apolitical policy research. You also leave unexamined the charge of conflict of interest on the part of readers who, being committed to the doctrine of apolitical research, could not evaluate it dispassionately. A just institution would want to examine, and not disregard, such charges. An honest and self-critical institution would want to examine, and not disregard, issues so central to its purpose and integrity.

I sent the correspondence to all members of the Brookings board and asked them to consider the matter. Six acknowledged the communication but no one later had the courtesy to inform me of the board's obvious decision to uphold Gordon. So, after thirteen years I left Brookings abruptly, without the usual farewell lunch; only one colleague arranged for a personal good-bye. Several condemned "them," the Brookings administration, but none did so openly. In Washington, discretion rules; one tries to speak the truth, but seldom the whole truth.

The National Academy of Public Administration, where I have been since 1973, functions like the National Academy of Sciences. It forms panels representing a broad range of views to consider issues of government administration and policy. Although I argue and disagree with panels when I think they are wrong or ducking impolitic facts, they, not I, bear final responsibility for any conclusions and recommendations. In a way this is a relief, and certainly it is a more honest arrangement than that at Brookings where the staff must accept but not acknowledge institutional restraints on the free expression of their views.

Plainly, I have left the field of anthropology, no matter how generously it may be defined, though I have never regretted making it my field of study in graduate school. On my passport and other forms I state that I am a sociologist, an inadequate but mercifully vague word. I belong to half a dozen societies and no profession; I take colleagueship and discussion (with citizens or scholars) seriously; and I dislike conceit, monopoly, obfuscation, and puffery.

At one time I had considered graduate study in sociology but felt there was little to learn that I could not learn by myself. Sociology is ridden with terms and doctrines masquerading as concepts and theories, and with fads offered as signs of progress. It is a carnival, a Tivoli with tearooms for the pedants, countinghouses for the numerologists, teahouses for the scatological, and stacks of pottery for those who like to break plates. Anthropology makes up in content what it lacks in theory. Properly taught—with sensitivity and subtlety, some attention to physical anthropology and archaeology, and much attention to history—it is

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an immensely broadening subject, vital for a liberal education, setting man in his place in nature and history and catching more of the round of life than the other social sciences, especially as they grow narrower, more specialized, and artificial.

The residue of anthropology in my work, overlain with many other influences, may be imperceptible to the reader (though one reviewer of a recent book on accreditation believed he saw it). To me, it consists of a little theory or information and a few words—principally "informant"; occasionally "ritual," "rite," "custom," "culture," "structure," and "function." It is an outlook that respects all groups and individuals, and regards all observations—on or off camera, whether in personal conversation or formal interviews, in public meetings or private records, in actions, gestures, or words—as evidence to be evaluated for its relevance, authenticity, and significance. It sees society as a cultural and social, biological and personal collage roughly or discordantly assembled, not smoothly articulated or fully finished. It attempts to see men and society in the distinctive place they happen to occupy by the accidents and heritage of history, and to capture that place with selective, lifelike detail.

That is what I have retained, or made, of my anthropological education. Others at school with me (John Honigmann, Alan Holmberg, John Goggin, Ward Goodenough, Thomas Gladwin, Sidney Mintz, Floyd Lounsbury, Harold Vreeland, Richard Adams, Ruth Landman) undoubtedly retained, or made, different conceptions of the discipline. Academicians cannot and will not believe it; but what they call "theory," what they dwell upon lovingly and tiresomely and deem the heart and organizing principle of their discipline, has little or no importance in applied research and governmental affairs. The contrary contention that one must have a theory before one can act will not withstand scrutiny.

Theories are intellectual conceits: none is adequate to explain the fearful volume and complexity of events. Were theory—a large, clear, consistent, and genuinely explanatory idea—necessary to action, life would stop. Children, illiterates, animals (and we are all part animal), and scholars outside and inside the classroom act habitually through a mixture of thought, habit, and feeling—in ways that can be attributed to theory only by attributing to it all perception, emotion, conviction, habit, custom, experience, illusion, hope, and thought. Theory is important in academic disciplines not because it is true but because it is convenient, helping to organize otherwise unwieldy data, simplifying the otherwise inordinate tasks of memory, education, research, influence, and indoctrination. In the real world, and the worlds of government and politics, policy and administration, theory is (except for fanatics and ideologues) often an inconvenience, a handicap, and a trap. It commits one to a position, reduces maneuverability, and invites attacks that are

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readily avoidable by adopting no theory—or many theories, regardless of their inconsistency.

Most citizens and politicians are intellectual eclectics and pragmatists, as they must be because of the volatility and complexity of the social and political scene. Most laws and social policies are intellectually vague and inconsistent. Governmental goals are stated in broad, diffuse terms to satisfy as many interests as possible; policy is not made, it happens—is inherited, fragmented, and contradictory.

The social scientist who wants to function successfully in this milieu must be as pragmatic and adaptable as the politician. This is why fewer social scientists than lawyers, journalists, and bright people with a bachelor's or master's degree—that is, fewer specialists than literate generalists—serve as aides to congressmen and presidential appointees. Social scientists with Ph.D.'s are more comfortable working for administrative bureaucracies which observe systematic procedures, generate countless forms, and sort vast masses of paper data that often bear as little relation to reality as the data generated by similar social "scientific" procedures. The growth of empirical social research, though, has lagged behind the growth of bureaucracy. For a hundred years, the expansion of higher education has enabled most social scientists to remain aloof from bureaucracies; in the future, they seem doomed to serve them. And having started my career as an anthropologist without a tribe, I now realize that I have acquired—indeed, am an elder of—one of my own: the scarified tribe of social scientists who observe and serve bureaucracies.

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Which Is the Jew that Shakespeare Drew?

Shylock Among the Critics

MOODY E. PRIOR

JOHN DONNE LONGED TO TALK to some old lover's ghost who died before the god of love was born. I would like to talk to some old theater lover's ghost who lived when Shakespeare's plays were receiving their first performances and who frequented the Globe Theatre. I would have many questions to ask him, but before much else I would surely want to discover his first impressions on seeing *The Merchant of Venice* and his feelings about Shylock. Today an open response to this play has become virtually impossible. Most people, before they ever experience the play in reading or performance, have already come across "the pound of flesh" as a proverbial expression and "Shylock" as a synonym for a cunning and heartless creditor. They are already predisposed toward a particular response to the play's best known and most exciting character, like jurors assailed by sensational journalistic accounts of a criminal case before they are assigned to it. More important is our uneasiness about the jeering at Shylock's expense because he is a Jew, as well as a prevailing notion that, in spite of Shakespeare's reputation as a universal genius, certain differences between his age and ours have rendered a proper response to *The Merchant* beyond our reach. Reviewing a production of *The Merchant* at Stratford in 1960 for *Encounter*, Nigel Dennis noted that it "left the daily critics crazed with admiration," but he pronounced it "a gawky representation of the twentieth-century conscience" in which Shylock was portrayed sympathetically at the expense of everyone else in the play rather than as "the creature of melodrama" which the original called for. Dennis concluded that the original conception "could probably not be produced at all . . . , for there is no reason why, when something horrible has happened in recent history, we should not refuse to produce a work of fiction which makes it laughable."

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The bias of the other characters in the play against Shylock is indeed so pronounced and demeaning that it can embarrass present-day audiences, to the extent that productions of the play, especially if they favor an unsympathetic portrayal of the character, have at times been attacked, threatened with boycott, and even cancelled. But well before the infamies of the Hitler regime, the feeling existed that productions of the original play were in bad taste. In 1911, E. E. Stoll concluded that the Elizabethan Shylock was not acceptable in the modern theater, and that "on the popular stage . . . Shylock must be played pretty much as Irving played him," even though "this is not Shakespeare's Shylock at all." The sensitiveness of our century to racial oppression has profoundly affected current attitudes toward the play, but important as these are, the basic critical problem about *The Merchant* and Shylock cannot be defined exclusively in terms of them. It has arisen out of an awareness of serious friction between the easy charm of the romantic comedy and the extraordinary originality and power of the character of Shylock and the complexity of his role, an awareness that goes back to the earliest recorded response to the character. As early as 1709, Nicholas Rowe rejected the idea of Shylock as a grotesque comic villain. He observed of "the incomparable character of Shylock the Jew" that "though we have seen the play received and acted as a comedy, and the part of the Jew performed by an excellent comedian, yet I cannot but think it was designed tragically by the author. There appears in it such a deadly spirit of revenge, such a savage fierceness and fellness, and such a bloody designation of cruelty and mischief, as cannot agree either with the style or characters of comedy."

Rowe, in addition to being a successful dramatist, was the first of the eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare, and his idea of the play was based on a knowledge of the original text. The performance he alludes to was an adaptation by George Granville entitled *The Jew of Venice*, produced in 1701 with a well-known comic actor, Thomas Doggett, as Shylock. There is no record of any performances of *The Merchant* during the Restoration, and the conjecture that Shylock was originally performed at the Globe by Richard Burbage in a red wig rests chiefly on a forgery by the nineteenth-century scholar John Collier. The modern theatrical history of *The Merchant* begins in the eighteenth century and represents generally a repudiation of the comic Shylock. For his celebrated performance in 1741, Charles Macklin restored the original text and brought to the part the intensity and passion that Rowe believed it called for, thereby establishing the character as a serious role for a distinguished actor—a conception which has continued to this day. An admiring line of verse, attributed to Pope, proclaimed, "This is the Jew that

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Shakespeare drew"—by no means the only definitive pronouncement about the play to be later set aside with equal conviction. Edmund Kean risked his professional career on a sympathetic interpretation of Shylock in 1814 and as a result established his reputation. Responding to this performance, Hazlitt wrote, "Certainly our sympathies are much oftener with him [Shylock] than with his enemies. He is honest in his vices; they are hypocrites in their virtues." With Henry Irving, Shylock in 1879 became unmistakably a figure of pathos. In the theater of our century, pronounced comic treatment of Shylock has been generally avoided, and the number of distinguished actors who have been attracted to the role has confirmed Shylock as the focus of the play and as the feature which makes it memorable.

The actors had gotten hold of a wonderful vehicle, but could their Shylock possibly be Shakespeare? The criticism of *The Merchant* during our century has been much preoccupied with this question, and a major critical effort has gone into correcting distortions and extravagances, whether of actors or critics, and into rediscovering the lineaments of the original romantic comedy. The general strategy has been to reduce Shylock's commanding presence in the play and return him to his proper role as villain and comic. The complexity attributed to Shylock as a character has been minimized, and he is made to appear in an unsympathetic light so that a comic response can be restored to the scenes in which he appears, and it will then be possible to respond with proper delight at the triumph of those who have opposed him and who end the comedy on a note of gaiety and harmony. This criticism has been extraordinary in volume and variety and is full of interesting information and acute observations; but in its entirety it is a formidable jungle to be penetrated only with patience and persistence. However, the methods by which the problem has been approached and their success in resolving it can be fairly illustrated by considering in some detail distinguished examples of the principal modes of critical procedure which have been applied to the play—historical, archetypal, and thematic.

The first serious attack on the Shylock problem was that of the historical critics, who in the early years of the century confidently thought of themselves as "scientific." The answer, they believed, was to be found through a recovery of Shakespeare's age and theater. The classic work of historical criticism devoted to Shylock is that of E. E. Stoll, *Shakespeare Studies, Historical and Comparative in Method* (1927), an amplification of an earlier version in 1911. Stoll had the developments in the theater very much in mind: "Criticism, unlike acting," he wrote, "has to do with truth." His ruling assumption is that a popular dramatist, "even more

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than other artists, cannot play a lone hand but must regard the established traditions of his art, the rooted sentiments and prejudices of his public." In Shakespeare's age, two aspects of Shylock gave offense—he is a Jew and a usurer; and on the basis of evidence which shows the antagonism toward Jews and usurers to have been strong and widespread, Stoll concludes that there could have been no sympathy for Shylock and hence the dramatist could not have been trying to arouse any. Comedy, says Stoll, is governed "not by our sympathetic passions but our social prejudices," and must follow well-established stereotypes and theatrical traditions: "Just as sympathy at the theatre traditionally is for the debtor and against the money-lender, so it is for the amorous son or eloping daughter." Stoll found in Shylock "the comic villain, and though finely and delicately done, nothing really and sincerely pathetic in him at all." The sympathetic Shylock was a creature not of Shakespeare and the sixteenth century but of the modern conscience: "Though our hearts are softened by Shylock's recital of the indignities he has suffered, the hearts of the Elizabethans, by a simpler way of thinking, are hardened."

Stoll's study is heavily weighted on the side of this view of the play. He provides the background of the disapproval of usury but concerns himself less with the extent to which attitudes were changing. The large body of scholarship on usury shows that although usury was widely condemned and the usurer aroused suspicion and dislike, at the same time usury was gaining influential apologists; as a practical necessity in business it was legally recognized and controlled and frequently practiced. An independent mind like Bacon's saw nothing sinful about this. "To speak of the abolishing of usury is idle," he wrote in his essay "Of Usury": "All states have ever had it in one kind or rate, or other. So as that opinion must be sent to Utopia."

The Merchant itself reflects some of this ferment. The first meeting of Shylock and Antonio is the occasion for a discussion of opposing views of usury. In defense of his business methods, Shylock alludes to the clever practices of Jacob in increasing his share by breeding spotted sheep, but against this analogy Antonio invokes the traditional argument that metal is sterile and cannot breed: "Was this inserted to make interest good? / Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?" Antonio is satisfied that he has the better of the argument, but Shylock is given the last word in this exchange with his pragmatic answer, "I cannot tell, I make it breed as fast." Someone like Bacon would have understood; he refers disdainfully to arguments like those used by Antonio as "wittie invectives." And while it is true that every character in the play except Shylock heartily disapproves of usury, yet in an emergency Antonio overcomes his lifelong disapproval and his moral repugnance and consents to borrow

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money from a usurer. The play takes sides in the debate, for it shows usury in an unamiable light and the usurer on the losing side; but at the same time Shakespeare has dramatized some of the tensions and ambiguities arising from the changing situation of his day.

The matter of Shylock's Jewishness is at once simpler and more difficult. All historical studies of the Jews in Europe support the view that they were barred from normal civic relationships and opportunities, and that the epithet "Jew" was almost invariably pejorative. This abundant evidence would seem to verify Stoll's contention that as a professional playwright Shakespeare could not have represented a Jewish character sympathetically in the popular theater. Yet if this is so, how are we to account for *The Three Ladies of London* (1584), a play in which the Jewish moneylender Gerontus is more honest and law-abiding than the Christian Italian merchant Mercadorus? From the same background also emerged Barabas in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, in which Barabas identifies himself in the prologue as a Machiavellian, though in this respect he is no match for the Christians in the play. With two such disparate Jewish characters in popular drama coming out of the same background, it cannot be plausibly maintained that Shakespeare was confined to but one model upon which he could draw Shylock.

One historical fact of importance in this connection is that in consequence of the expulsion of the Jews from England by Edward I in 1290, only Christianized Jews could have been residents in England during the sixteenth century and those could not have been many. Usurers would of necessity have been Christians. A moneylender dressed in Jewish costume and publicly professing Jewish religious practices would not have been seen on the streets of London. Shylock must have created the impression of an exotic, as he does in the theater today. It has been suggested that the Jewishness of Shylock was only a means of drawing public hatred against a character actually meant to represent the predatory, ruthless commercialism that was becoming a conspicuous feature of sixteenth-century England, a view which tends to diminish the importance of the Jewish element.

Yet that Shylock is a Jew is an important mark of his otherness. He is almost never referred to without a disparaging epithet such as "villain Jew," "dog Jew," "harsh Jew," and the like. What is even more important, Shylock himself insists on his Jewishness. He wears a "Jewish gabardine," he insists on his social isolation and his dietary taboos, and in one of the most frequently quoted speeches proclaims, "I am a Jew." However, the play establishes an important distinction as to what being a Jew means. Jessica leaves her father and becomes a Christian, and the elegant people at Belmont accept her as one of them. She need only say, "But

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though I am a daughter to his blood / I am not to his manners." The antipathy to Shylock as a Jew in the play does not arise from some property within him which is regarded as by nature ineradicable from him and his descendants, and in this respect it is not identical with anti-Semitism in our times. When Shylock is compelled to become a Christian, his adversaries, in the opinion of some critics, save his soul, but they also remove one barrier to his becoming a social equal (the Christianized Portuguese Jew, Roderigo Lopez, became physician to Queen Elizabeth).

The valuable contribution of historical literary scholarship is that it clears up obscurities, presents the special terms in which the thought and sentiments of another age were addressed and the special choices which the conditions of the time imposed on those who lived in it, and so saves the critic from ignorance and error and from the disabling limitations of chronological provincialism. It cannot prescribe limits upon how an imaginative and perceptive author might have chosen to present the materials he selected from his own complex and vital age, and it cannot provide the final answer to literary and artistic questions—it cannot, for example, determine whether a play is serious or comic. The clues to guide our sympathies and responses to an individual unique work have to be provided by the author and are to be sought for within the scheme of the work itself, and on essential matters Shakespeare almost never fails us. Stoll's historical investigation ends in a paradox: there are two essentially different *Merchants* using precisely the same speeches—the play created by the actors, and the Elizabethan play, now a historic oddity unwelcome in our theater.

Archetypal criticism goes beyond history to the primitive origins of the universal patterns which are presumed to underlie a literary work and illuminate it. "Drama, like religious ritual, plays upon atavistic impulses of the mind," writes J. I. M. Stewart: "All true drama penetrates through representative fiction to the condition of myth." In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959), C. L. Barber associates the formal pattern and the spirit of the comedies before 1600 with certain still surviving traditional festivals in England, which derived ultimately from remote folk-ritual occasions. These festivals afforded momentary release from the daily submission to convention, moral restraint, and social decorum by permitting pleasure and unrestraint to reign for a brief time. The comedies reflect the festival idea in the merriment and misrule of the occasion, which joins the characters in a sense of community against solemnity. Barber writes:

> Figures like Malvolio and Shylock embody the . . . kill-joy qualities. . . . Behind the laughter and the butts there is always a sense of solidarity about pleasure, a

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communion embracing the merrymakers in the play and the audience, who have gone on holiday in going to a comedy.

The specific values which *The Merchant* celebrates are those relating to the proper uses of wealth:

> [It] exhibits the beneficence of civilized wealth, the something-for-nothing which wealth gives to those who use it graciously to live together in a humanly knit group. It also deals, in the role of Shylock, with anxieties about money, and its power to set men at odds.

Barber follows those who relate these anxieties to the new commercialism of the Renaissance. Unlike Shylock, Antonio refuses to take interest and is willing to hazard money for the sake of some human good, like love and friendship. But there is an uneasiness about wealth, which is embodied in Shylock, and which Barber explains by relating Shylock to the archetypal scapegoat "in whom the evils potential in a social organization are embodied, recognized, and enjoyed during a period of licence, and then in due course abused, ridiculed, and expelled."

Except for Shylock, the characters of the play display a casual attitude toward wealth. Bassanio's choice of the right casket is the prodigal's luck, "meaningful as an expression of the triumph of human social relations over the relations kept track over by accounting"—the method of the "ogre of money power," Shylock. Barber's interpretation of the opposition of justice and mercy in similar terms is, however, a more serious matter. In accordance with the idea of *The Merchant* as a festive comedy, mercy

> becomes the word that gathers everything we have seen the Venetians enjoying in their reliance on community. What is on one side an issue of principles is on the other a matter of social solidarity. . . . Comedy, in one way or another, is always asking for amnesty, after showing the moral machinery of life getting in the way of life. . . . It has been in giving and taking, beyond the compulsion of accounts, that Portia, Bassanio, Antonio have enjoyed the something-for-nothing that Portia here summarizes in speaking of the gentle rain from heaven.

This is a surprising equivalent for Portia's celebrated speech, in which mercy is an attribute of God, without which none of us would see salvation.

We may wonder now whether Barber's idea can comfortably include within its grasp all the various elements in this play. Can it be made to account for Shylock as a comic character? "Shylock is comic," Barber maintains, "so far as he is so, because he exhibits what should be human, degraded into mechanism. The reduction of life to mechanism goes with

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the miser's wary calculation, with the locking up, with the preoccupation with 'that which is mine own.' " In the scene with Tubal, Shylock becomes the complete butt, "caught in compulsive, reflexive responses, when instead of controlling mechanism he is controlled by it." Bergson's theory of comedy on which this portion of Barber's discussion depends has never been happily applied to Shakespeare because of Shakespeare's characteristic tendency to probe for the human source of response in his characters, even stock types and minor figures. In any comic unmasking, Barber notes, there is pathos, but Shylock's baseness deflects it, so that even the pathos of the detail about Leah's ring "is being fed into the comic mill and makes the laughter all the more hilarious." Hilarity, however, has not marked the major productions of *The Merchant* since the eighteenth century.

Barber calls attention to the historical changes which have raised difficulties about Shylock as a butt, and in support of this view Barber resorts to one of the most dubious generalizations with which students of English Renaissance drama have tried to account for certain of its disturbing features: "Most important of all, suffering was not an absolute evil in an era when men sometimes embraced it deliberately, accepted it as inevitable, and could watch it with equanimity." (What then of the servant in *King Lear* who turns on Cornwall in disgust to restrain him from blinding Gloucester?) Barber then adds, "For the Elizabethan age, to understand did not necessarily mean to forgive." (Were there no serious Christians living in Shakespeare's England? Was the New Testament unknown? What would these less than pagans have made of Prospero's "I do forgive thee, / Unnatural though thou art"?) Considering the excellent qualities of this study, it is likely that Barber did not believe any of this. In the same context we come upon the remarkable statement, "Shakespeare's marvellous creative sympathy takes the stock role of the Jewish usurer and villain and conveys how it would feel to be a man living inside of it." Barber acknowledges that "after all the praise for the way the play makes its distinction about the use of wealth . . . , when thinking about it, I find the distinction, as others have, somewhat too easy," and confesses to a difficulty about Shylock whether in reading or performance: Shylock's "part fits perfectly into the design of the play, and yet he is so alive that he raises an interest beyond its design." With these reflections, which enter in almost as asides, Barber seems to abandon all the territory he has won and returns us to the central dilemma which, after a good deal of interesting discussion, we find to remain still unresolved, still teasing the mind.

Thematic criticism makes occasional use of the fruits of historical and archetypal criticism, but its primary concern is with the controlling

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attitudes, ideas, or values underlying the play, which provide the basis for the play's unity and meaning; and it traces these through images, symbols, motifs, and the like. A comprehensive and sensitive thematic analysis of *The Merchant* is that of J. R. Brown in his book *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (1957) and in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play. The unifying concept of the play for Brown is the proper use of wealth. Though Shylock and Antonio both engage in commerce, Antonio is ready to abandon the claims of commerce for those of friendship. This pervading idea Brown traces in the metaphorical expression of love's usury in contrast to the usury of money:

> Shakespeare saw love as a kind of usury, and so in their marriage Bassanio and Portia put Nature's bounty to its proper "use." Shylock practices usury for the sake of gain and is prepared to enforce his rights; the lovers practice their usury without compulsion, for the joy of giving.

Love's usury is illustrated as well in Jessica, who finds "peace and happiness with her 'unthrift' love," her extravagances forgivable after the restraints of her father's gospel of thrift. The mottoes on the caskets apply, by transference, to the difference between Antonio and Shylock: the one gives and hazards all for his friend (the motto on the lead casket) and the other sticks by the bond and asks to get what he deserves (the silver casket).

Brown traces the development of this theme in other works of Shakespeare, principally *Romeo and Juliet, Love's Labour's Lost, The Taming of the Shrew,* and the *Sonnets.* An important feature of *The Merchant* thus emerges into the light more clearly than ever before, but it is significant that the lines which Brown uses as a virtual leitmotiv of his discussion are from the *Sonnets:* "That use is not forbidden usury / Which happies those that pay the willing loan." Brown is critical of the concern with character in the study of Shakespeare's plays, and while acknowledging Shakespeare's interest "in character and the oddities of human nature," he doubts whether after a study of such matters "one has truly expressed either the content of the comedies as a whole, or the direction in which Shakespeare's ever-vigilant artistic conscience was developing his comic vision." For this kind of objective Brown's work is properly designed, but an understanding of *The Merchant* as an individual play calls, as Brown is aware, for other considerations.

> Even when the central theme has been recognized, *The Merchant of Venice* is not an "easy" play; it presents an action to which we must respond as to a golden ideal, and also as to a human action. . . . Judged against Shakespeare's

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ideal of love's wealth we cannot doubt on which side our sympathies should rest, but such final harmony is only established after we have judged, as in life, between mixed motives and imperfect responses.

"Human action," "as in life"—Brown's analysis does not prepare us to cope with considerations of this kind. He explains any disappointing imperfections in these friends and lovers as the natural consequence of the unsparing mirror Shakespeare holds up to nature, which shows "that those who oppose the fortunes of lovers are apt to get more than justice as punishment at their hands. . . . The trial scene shows that the pursuit of love's wealth does not necessarily bring with it a universal charity." It is, however, this same universal charity which they all demand of Shylock when they urge him to be merciful—and, oddly, Brown gives scant notice to the theme of justice and mercy. If our sympathies for the devotees of love's wealth hesitate in the face of these promptings, it is because Shylock, the character who interferes with our inclination to laugh with the others over his daughter and his ducats, has been less than adequately considered. Thematic analysis has its limitations when applied to a dramatic structure because a play is not essentially a composite of themes or a dialectic of ideas and attitudes.

The Merchant emerges from Brown's study as a disquieting work, but for somewhat new reasons. He observes of the happy group at Belmont that "their happiness is not all that we would wish." Their happiness, fortunately for them, is virtually total. It is their humanity and understanding that we despair of. We are left with the apprehension that love's wealth is, in its own way, as selfish and almost as destructive of generous humanity as Shylock's more candid commercialism operating under the protection of Venetian law.

All three of these serious and impressive studies end with a concession which acknowledges the complexity of Shylock and the ambiguity of the play, yet the assumption which controls the discussion is that Shylock must be diminished and made more manageable and so less disruptive to the romantic comedy of love and friendship which constitutes the bulk of the play. The character of Shylock is viewed as static—a historical stereotype, an archetypal figure, a thematic opposite. In a dramatic structure, however, and especially in a play of Shakespeare's, the characters exist in dynamic relation to the action: They unfold, alter direction, even change in our perception of them. The only partial success of these critical efforts suggests that no method of analysis, applied with whatever learning or skill, can succeed in making *The Merchant* a completely coherent play, or in reversing the impression which has grown up

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over many years that Shylock is one of the marvels of Shakespeare's ability to transcend the limitations of vision of his age, and even perhaps his own prejudices, always probing below the surface and exceeding theatrical expectations in creating characters that defy time. Most of the great body of criticism of *The Merchant,* in spite of its variety, is governed by similar assumptions about the nature of the play as one of Shakespeare's comedies of love and courtship, and about Shylock's place in the play as the character who stands in the way of the happiness of the young friends and lovers. A strict adherence to these limits, however, inevitably leads to paradox and frustration. All serious studies concede that *The Merchant* does not always retain its character as a genial comedy, and most critics and actors are not really satisfied that Shylock is simply the Jew and usurer that the characters in the play look upon as a figure of menace and fun.

Just what is Shylock besides being a Jew and a usurer? He shows himself to be intelligent as well as cunning, able as well as shrewd, with strong feelings, a deep sense of his own worth, and fiercely protective of the ideas and values which he prizes. He is presumably of some consequence in commercial Venice (why else is he sought out for the loan?); yet no matter what his usefulness or merits, he occupies an insecure and uncertain position in his own community. Though his moneylending is protected by law, he is disapproved of on principle and disdained by those who belong to Venice in the fullest sense—respected citizens against whom no doors are barred and to whom the full privileges and perquisites of being a Venetian are not denied. Because of the stigma attached to usury, those who practice it are usually already outside the pale—Jews, for instance. Shylock is both Jew and usurer and these disabilities separate him from his fellow Venetians and isolate him in a society which tolerates yet despises him and has set limits on his participation. He is in the society but never fully of it. He is an outsider.

This is a condition which Shakespeare presented in a variety of manifestations, and Shylock is but one in a striking gallery of such figures who experience discrimination by virtue of something which shuts them off from full participation in the world in which they must live, irrespective of their usefulness or talents: Richard III—"Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature, / Deformed, unfinished . . . dogs bark at me when I halt by them"; Othello, admired and respected in Venice, but still not exactly the right husband for a senator's daughter, "an extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere"; Edmund, acknowledged and brought up by Gloucester but deeply resentful of the handicap of his birth—"Why bastard? wherefore base?"; even Malvolio, a professional who manages Olivia's affairs but must endure the insults of Sir Toby—

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"Art any more than a steward?"; and the most confused and embittered of the lot, Caliban—"You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse." To recognize Shylock's kinship with these is to release him for the moment from the limits within which the judgments of his betters in the play has confined him.

Familiarity has made it difficult to grasp the extraordinary impact of Shylock's first appearance in the third scene and to appreciate how revealing it is. Antonio opens the first scene with the line, "In sooth I know not why I am so sad," and Portia the second, "By my troth Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world," a parallelism which arouses expectations that these two will be the principals and that the action will bring them together. These scenes also introduce a polite, pleasant world of affluence, genial companionship, and love. Two possible sources of trouble disturb the surface of the opening scenes—Bassanio's need for money which prompts Antonio to seek a loan, and Portia's unhappiness over the strange requirement that she must marry whoever chooses the right one among three caskets. The caskets do not seriously threaten; the long chances of such fanciful dangers always favor the handsome young man who risks them for the princess. The loan seems even less cause for alarm. Antonio's wealth is temporarily tied up in numerous sea ventures, but he knows his high standing among the merchants and anticipates no difficulty when he commissions Bassanio to "try what my credit can in Venice do":

> Go presently inquire (and so will I)
> Where money is, and I no question make
> To have it of my trust, or for my sake.

Now, suddenly and with no preparation, there enters an extraordinary figure from another sphere, totally different from the others in dress and manners, muttering suspiciously, "Three thousand ducats, well." Shylock's entrance is a stunning surprise, as well as a striking theatrical statement that heralds the shattering impact this unexpected figure will make on the society we have been introduced to. With Shylock the harsh practicalities of commercial Venice intrude upon the urbanity and careless hedonism of the men in the first scene, and eventually upon the fairy-tale courtship and the never-never land of Belmont.

The confrontation with Shylock is the more astonishing because it is unexplained. How did it come about that the best that Bassanio could do in all Venice in the name of the honored and successful merchant is a despised Jewish usurer and the special enemy of Antonio? It is a fine example of Shakespeare's dramatic sleight of hand in this play that this im-

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portant detail has generally remained unnoticed; but if it has escaped the critics it has not escaped Shylock. Everything he says and does in this scene is charged with his awareness of this unique circumstance. Bassanio's invitation to dinner may look like an unheard-of courtesy, but Shylock rejects it with passion:

> Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into: I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following: but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.

The rejection is stated as a matter of principle and honor, without cringing or embarrassment. A gulf separates them, leaving only the impersonal grounds of business on which they can meet. But the commercial purpose of the meeting is not the main interest for Shylock, and the repeated turning over the terms of the loan is a pretense, a delaying tactic for sizing up the situation.

When Antonio arrives, Shylock interrupts the talk about business and goes directly to what has become of greater interest to him than the loan: "Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow upon advantage." Antonio, having applied to the outcast Jewish usurer for assistance, is at last vulnerable, and Shylock takes advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to justify himself and explain the legitimacy of his profession. Antonio argues against Shylock's use of the biblical story of Jacob and the spotted sheep by repeating the conventional arguments against usury, and ends with a pious rebuff: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. . . . O what a goodly outside falsehood hath!" Shylock does not retreat before this defeat. Once more he breaks off from the pretense of considering the terms of the loan and confronts Antonio with the intolerable indignity of their request in a long speech which makes explicit the human dilemma in which his position as an outsider has now placed him:

> Signor Antonio, many a time and oft
> In the Rialto you have rated me
> About my moneys and my usances:
> Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
> (For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe)
> You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
> And spet upon my Jewish gabardine,
> And all for use of that which is mine own.
> Well then, it now appears you need my help:
> Go to then, you come to me, and you say,
> "Shylock, we would have moneys," you say so:
> You that did void your rheum upon my beard,

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> And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
> Over your threshold, moneys is your suit.
> What should I say to you? Should I not say
> "Hath a dog money? Is it possible
> A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" or
> Shall I bend low, and in a bondsman's key
> With bated breath, and whisp'ring humbleness
> Say this:
>
> "Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last,
> You spurned me such a day, another time
> You called me dog: and for these courtesies
> I'll lend you thus much moneys?"

If he is what they have alleged him to be, how can they possibly ask him for money, and if he is not, how can he possibly be expected to lend it to them? But Antonio will not grant Shylock a measure of human understanding for the loan:

> I am like to call thee so again,
> To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too.
> If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
> As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
> A breed for barren metal of his friend?
> But lend it rather to thine enemy,
> Who if he break, thou may'st with better face
> Exact the penalty.

With these speeches the effect produced by the first two scenes has undergone serious modification. Shylock has emerged as a character whose possibilities for thought and action are complex and not readily predictable, and has broken out of the confines of whatever stereotype he might at first glance seem designed for. What a stock character cannot do is to lay claim to properties that enlarge the scope of his actions and reveal such possibilities of depth and independence as to arouse curiosity and understanding. The kind of stock character designed to afford amusement by being exposed to ridicule and at last comically exposed and rejected cannot be allowed to arouse sympathy, and our feelings must be insulated from his sufferings. After the exchange with Antonio, Shylock is no longer suitable for a comic butt. He has introduced a new and disturbing force into the play.

This is the setting for the infamous bond. It is almost invariably understood to be a malicious trap set by Shylock to destroy his unwary adversary, but this view disregards an important aspect of the transaction—that the loan is by reasonable standards safe and that the two profession-

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als involved are confident that there is no likelihood of a default. Before he talks with Antonio, Shylock reviews Antonio's assets, takes account of the risks, and decides that "the man is notwithstanding sufficient,—three thousand ducats,—I think I may take his bond." When Bassanio shows alarm at Shylock's proposal, Antonio reassures him:

> Why fear not man, I will not forfeit it,—
> Within these two months, that's a month before
> This bond expires, I do expect return
> Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

Whether Shylock's protestations of friendship, a point much argued about, is genuine or hypocritical is beyond settling, and in any case beside the point. In his repulse of Shylock's passionate speech, Antonio asks, "When did friendship take / A breed for barren metal of his friend?" and now Shylock, about to propose a loan without interest, takes his cue from that speech:

> Why look you how you storm!
> I would be friends with you, and have your love,
> Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
> Supply your present wants, and take no doit
> Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me.

The overt statement here may conceal mockery rather than hypocrisy, for after Antonio's rebuke, what Shylock says and does becomes ironic, cryptic, indirect. The bond he proposes contains savage terms, but it is a maliciously brilliant rebuke rather than a trap. Shylock will, in effect, lend the money without interest, but since they will always have it that he is a dog Jew and a cur, it will be a cur's contract.

There is a shocking difference between the Shylock of this scene and the obsessed, murderous Shylock of the courtroom scene. The event which precipitates the change is Jessica's flight from his house with much of his treasure, and her marriage to Lorenzo, a Christian. As a pariah, Shylock has shored up his defenses against the demeaning position imposed on him. He makes a virtue of the marks of his separateness—his religious practices, his costume, and his dislike of what he believes to be the looseness of Christian manners (he commands Jessica to close the shutters of his "sober house" to shut out the music and rowdy merriment of the maskers). He covets his wealth as a source of his security and power; he tells the court when his wealth is confiscated,

> Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that—
> You take my house, when you do take the prop

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That doth sustain my house: you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

He guards his daughter as he does his wealth. And he has the support of the Venetian law which is his protection against oppression.

The interview with Bassanio and Antonio, however, is unsettling. He had rejected Bassanio's invitation to dinner, but later he wavers—"Wherefore should I go," he tells Jessica, "I am not bid for love, they flatter me." Nevertheless, he does go. The barrier that separated him from his betters has for once been laid down, and the opportunity is disturbing yet tempting. He goes with misgivings, which prove all too prescient. The dinner is the occasion for the flight of Jessica, with the knowledge and connivance of his hosts. The citadel of his isolation, his "sober house," has been breached, his daughter is gone, his wealth robbed, and nothing remains of the pieces of his carefully designed defense against the overbearing superiority of his adversaries except the integrity of Venetian law. At first, however, it is not the bond that is uppermost in his mind. When Solanio and Salerio, uneasy about rumors of Antonio's losses and eager to sound out Shylock, ask him, "How now, Shylock! What news among the merchants?" his immediate response is, "You knew, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight." Only after they press the point—"Do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?"—does Shylock, as though recalling another grievance, turn the passion of the moment against Antonio: "There I have another bad match . . . let him look to his bond!" The play leaves no doubt that Shylock's distress over the loss of Jessica will fuel the passion against Antonio. Upon first hearing of Shylock's wild behavior over Jessica's betrayal, Solanio says, "Let good Antonio look he keep his day / Or he shall pay for this."

Shylock's behavior during these episodes marks the depth of the change. On his first appearance Shylock speaks with feeling as one who endures an ancient and intolerable wrong, but what he says is under complete control. With the invasion of his fortress, the wrong takes on an acutely personal character; he becomes erratic and his speech becomes agitated, intense, frenzied. Salerio reports, "I never heard a passion so confused / So strange, outrageous, and so variable / As the dog Jew did utter in the streets"; and in the scene with Tubal, Shylock confirms the description. However, in the midst of his distress he can concentrate his powers and turn upon Solanio and Salerio with the most famous of his speeches, "Hath not a Jew eyes? . . ." This speech is not a plea for sympathy or social justice, or for an end to racial discrimination. It says in brief that a Jew, being like other human beings in physical and

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psychological properties, is like others, including Christians, in wanting revenge for great wrongs. It should be seen in relation to his earlier great speech to Antonio. It demands that his conduct be viewed in universal human terms, not on grounds which isolate him from understanding on the assumption that he is a monster. The difference is in the heightened tone and in the emphasis on revenge, the single-minded aim on which all his confused passions will concentrate. He is like a man possessed, humiliating and threatening Antonio with the bond as Antonio follows him down the street to ask reprieve. And the instrument of his revenge will be his one remaining resource, the law. The unexpected bad luck of Antonio gives Shylock the power to pervert the law into an instrument that allows him to commit a criminal act.

All the parties at the trial agree that the evenhanded dispensing of justice is a distinctive merit of the Venetian state. Shylock pushes his advantage with monomaniacal determination, but some of the cold intelligence of his first interview with Antonio returns. When the Duke urges Shylock to be considerate, the latter embarrasses him by asking how much consideration they show to their slaves. When Bassanio asks, "Do all men kill the things they do not love?" Shylock's answer is provocative and unsettling: "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?" These questions remain unanswered in the courtroom. The only escape from the impasse facing the court appears to be mercy, and Portia's plea for mercy as the only alternative to the rigors of the law is so eloquent that it rises above the individual concerns of the characters. Nevertheless, the opposition of mercy to justice, so often extolled in commentaries on this scene, loses its purity when it is considered that the man for whom they all urge mercy is the one who, when asked earlier by Shylock for some consideration for his position as a man, could find no better answer than, "I am like to call thee so [dog] again, / To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too." Ironically, it is the law, not mercy, that comes to the rescue. The technicalities which Portia invokes overturn the pedantic precision upon which Shylock depends for revenge.

The character that reveals itself through this dramatic development is a Shylock upon whom many have applied the various resources of criticism in order to make him fit the role of conventional villain, and to make him contribute broadly to the comic mode in which the play is cast, thus allowing the devotees of love and friendship to triumph at the end with sympathy on their side. Such analyses derive some support from certain explicit statements in the play. Before Shylock talks with Antonio, he expresses his hatred of him in a soliloquy and concludes, "If I can catch him once upon the hip, / I will feed the ancient grudge I bear him." After Jessica leaves her father she reports,

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> When I was with him, I have heard him swear
> To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
> That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
> Than twenty times the value of the sum
> That he did owe him.

The implication is that Shylock's intent was murderous from the start, and the bond was initially intended as a trap. Such signs of an author's design play an important part in directing the reader or spectator. But far more telling than these signs, because more vivid and more memorable, are the impressions which the characters make in speaking and acting, and only when the two support one another do the explicit signs assume full authority.

It is one of the peculiar difficulties of *The Merchant* that the usual guideposts to our sympathy and understanding are sometimes ambiguous and not always in harmony with one another. Shylock is despised and ridiculed by every character in the play including his daughter, and his conduct is often ungracious—and at the end criminal. By all the rules of dramatic rhetoric we should sympathize with his adversaries and share their judgment. But something in the way this opposition is presented in the play hinders complete assent to their capacity, even their right, to judge Shylock. If we apply to them the same order of logic, the same intensity of perception that we are called upon to apply to Shylock himself, they fail us. Portia will seem heartless for her flippant indifference to the fate of the suitors who, because of their bad luck with the caskets, are doomed never to marry. Bassanio, who has squandered a fortune, not only asks his friend to lend him money so that he can go courting in style, but has no scruples about allowing the friend to borrow at interest against his friend's principles and practice, and—what is more—from his friend's bitter enemy. And why does Antonio have to default? Where are those many whom he had saved from Shylock's clutches? Was there no one to save a respected citizen from the humiliation of becoming prey to a despised usurer? It is unsportsmanlike to ask questions like these, and such is Shakespeare's dramatic legerdemain that mostly we don't ask them. It is as though two distinct orders of probability are at work simultaneously. The scenes of comradeship and merriment, the charmed retreat of Belmont, the fairy-tale courtship, the heroine disguised as a legal genius who triumphs in the fictional courtroom, the favorable turns of luck without which happy endings are hard to come by—we are asked to accept these engaging theatrical attractions, if not with the innocent delight of children listening to a fairy tale, then at least with the willingness with which we enter wholeheartedly into *As You Like It* or *Twelfth Night*.

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Yet the accumulated experience of more than two centuries has shown that this willingness may be more than can be readily granted, because wherever Shylock enters or impinges upon the affairs of the others, a different order of reality, a different kind of logic, seems called for. As a scale by which to measure Shylock, the lovers and friends are inappropriate and therefore inadequate. The Shylock who is spat upon by the good Antonio, whose money and jewels are stolen by Jessica and squandered thoughtlessly (even to the ring he had of Leah), who is lewdly baited in his distress by Salerio and Solanio and jeered at by Gratiano—this is Shylock the cultural stereotype, the stage villain, the grotesque comic who is so often urged upon us, but this is not the Shylock who dominates the play. None of the other characters, not even Portia, is as complex, or reveals as many surprising facets, or draws us to reflect on his human concerns as does Shylock, and for that reason the hatred and ridicule the others heap upon him do not have the effect of putting him in his place; they have the contrary effect of setting in relief the limitations of those who triumph over him. It is a discrepancy impossible of resolution.

There are those who regret this disproportion because it stains for them the charm of the principal story and obscures the theme. It should be put the other way, that these insoluble difficulties are not too great a price to pay for Shylock. What is *The Merchant* without him? The mistake in criticism is to force him into the straitjacket from which he escapes with his first appearance, in order to restore some ideal comedy which in fact has never existed. So arresting and disturbing is he that if *The Merchant* had ended with the courtroom scene where the main lines of the action come to their termination, the comedy would have been in ruins, leaving the uneasy "problem play" effect of, for instance, *Troilus and Cressida.* The fifth act demonstrates Shakespeare's sure instinct for the theater. The slender intrigue of the rings supplies scarcely enough story interest to keep matters going, yet the fifth act is vitally important, for with it the play is restored to the scale and idiom of the characteristic Shakespearean romantic comedy.

The fifth act is like the awakening from a bad dream. While these friends and lovers are confronted by Shylock, their "genius is rebuked as it is said Marc Antony's was by Caesar." Shylock has now been thrust from their world, and, in the Arcadian isolation of Belmont away from commercial Venice and the threatening events that have ensued, they slowly recover themselves. Nowhere else, not even in the first two scenes, do they strike such attractive attitudes or speak so well and clearly in their own voices. The function of the fifth act is to reconcile us to these happy few. In the enchantment of the summer night at Belmont,

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Shylock recedes until he appears to disturb their pleasant world less and less and in the theater seems to pass for the moment out of mind. But never completely. His presence seems to hover over the summer idyll in Belmont like an afterimage, and his disquieting presence in the play continues to engross and vex the critics. Shylock haunts us because, in more senses than one, the world which he inhabits is unable to contain him.

The Fall of the Sparrow

JENNIFER CREWE

If, in the uppermost limbs of an oak
the wind is sudden one particular morning,
or if a high stream of the sun bars the path of the air,
it will not fall.
If I screen the sun with my hand and look up
as long as I can hold the pose
I will not see it happen.

I never once thought
of the wood-speckled feathers,
or the pinched, jet eyes open to the end,
never listened for a last, nervous burst of song.
All the same I know I have felt it happen—
the dive, a single motion,
with its quiver deep in the mouth,
a tiny loss—
and that all this momentary fever is nothing
to that unsung knowledge,
a solitary calling.

JENNIFER CREWE's poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, the *Seattle Review*, and the *Ohio Review*.

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In the Dark Room

(For the Carrs)

CAROLYN ROSS

I ask what details
emerged first. You say for once
detail was not the point. It was the whole spirit,
the complete image come through at once

that set you down
in the dark of that room,
a luminescence that could light the way out
of any night.

A photograph in which you are very tall,
surrounded by your parents
yet surrounding them, arms growing
around them, gathering them in like soil.

Your father took nine months to die,
and now, in the picture,
is in the thick of it, looking
otherworldly, silly as a boy,

his thin hair tousled to a point
at the top of his head,
as if just before the camera clicked
you rumpled it, as if

he were already being drawn up.
Your mother leans toward him,

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but into you. She doesn't know
what she will do.

Behind the glasses her tears
are already welling, and drying.
She contemplates her first
independence.

Your faces all clutch
at the identical hurt smile;
never mind what your arms
are doing, you too are baffled.

Except that you are everywhere in this photograph
—behind the camera, taking the light,
and in the darkroom, finally, after the fact,
reeling with insight as the whole image grows

like crystal from the chemicals:
after all, we do choose.

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Coolidge and the Historians

THOMAS B. SILVER

THINK BACK UPON A DECADE OF UPHEAVAL in American history. The country's youngest president, having succeeded a conservative Republican and having sounded a clarion call to the progressive forces in the country, is now gone forever from the presidency. An activist Democratic president skillfully shepherds legislation through Congress, but wolfish war follows close on the heels of domestic reform. Radical protests against the system, and a few bombings, ignite national hysteria. The president retires in bitterness, soon to die. His Republican successor at first holds forth the hope of restoring the national composure, but he is replaced by his vice-president after a truncated term marred by economic dislocation and executive scandal unprecedented in American history.

Would it pass understanding if the new president set aside his clarion so that he might speak softly to his countrymen? As there are times during the nation's history that require its citizens to summon up their last reserves of daring and courage, are there not other times that call for the exercise of moderation and sobriety? Does not prudence comprehend all of the virtues?

Imagine a statesman ascending to the presidency after a decade of war, national hysteria, recession, and scandal. Imagine that the next five years are characterized by peace, national calm, unprecedented inflation-free prosperity, and rigid executive integrity. Would not the citizens bestow their gratitude upon the statesman who presided over such a time? And if it is true, as a famous political scientist once said, that we approach the subject of prudence by studying those to whom we attribute it, would not such a statesman be worthy of the attention of our political scientists and political historians?

When I wrote at the outset of this article about a decade of upheaval in American history, I had in mind the period from the first administration of Woodrow Wilson to the death of President Harding. During the five years following the decade 1914 to 1923, President Calvin Coolidge won the admiration and the gratitude of the American people. His three predecessors had begun their terms full of hope for the future, and had ended them, respectively, in defeat, repudiation, and death. Coolidge in-

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herited the leadership of his party and his country near a trough in their fortunes, and by the day of his retirement had brought them to a crest which neither would see again for a generation. The hallmarks of the years preceding Coolidge were war and depression; the hallmarks of the years following were depression and war. The hallmarks of the Coolidge era were prosperity and peace.

President Coolidge has not, however, won the admiration and gratitude of our political scientists and political historians. "The fact is that no historians write favorably about the twelve-year Republican interregnum compared with the Progressive Era that preceded it and the New Deal that followed." This statement is hardly less true today than it was when Basil Rauch wrote it twenty years ago. In 1962, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., published the results of a poll in which seventy-five American historians ranked thirty-one of the U.S. presidents. The average rank of the three Republican presidents of the twenties was twenty-sixth out of thirty-one. The average rank of their immediate predecessor and their two New Deal successors (who coincidentally were the first three Democratic presidents of the twentieth century) was fifth out of thirty-one.

Most historians write briefly about the thirtieth president, Calvin Coolidge, and they reach similar conclusions expressed in similar words. A standard account of Coolidge and the politics of the Roaring Twenties may be found in the vastly popular *Pocket History of the United States* by Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, two of America's most distinguished historians. Nevins and Commager state that Presidents Harding and Coolidge pursued a dual policy of laissez-faire capitalism and government subsidies to private enterprise. Whether one or the other approach was used in a particular case depended upon whether or not it would help business.

> In the domestic arena, the Harding administration inaugurated the reign of "normalcy"—and Harding's idea of normalcy was a return to the good old days of Mark Hanna and McKinley. This was not, as is sometimes supposed, pure laissez faire, but rather a felicitous combination of two policies—one, freedom of private enterprise from governmental restraint, and the other, generous subsidies to private enterprise. Government withdrew from business, but business moved in and shaped most government policies.

In the Commager and Nevins account, the obverse of concern for business was indifference toward other groups in society—especially disadvantaged groups.

> Concern for equality of opportunity would have come with better grace had the Harding and Coolidge administrations shown a sincere and sustained interest in the welfare of labor and farmer groups. But these administrations were inter-

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ested only in the "businessman," and their conception of business was a narrow one. Neither the farmers nor the workingman shared the piping prosperity of the twenties. There was a brief but sharp break in farm prices in 1921; by the mid-twenties a gradual decline set in and continued without interruption until the operation of the New Deal reforms became effective.

Yet in the face of this situation the Harding and Coolidge administrations, so eager to place the government at the disposal of business, evinced an attitude of indifference to the farming interests.

Calvin Coolidge, seen through the eyes of most historians, is no more agreeable in his person than he is in his policies. Nevins and Commager deride him as "a thoroughly limited politician, dour and unimaginative, thrifty of words and ideas, devoted to the maintenance of the status quo, and morbidly suspicious of liberalism in any form."

A similar portrait of Coolidge may be found in *The Oxford History of the American People* by Samuel Eliot Morison. This book is one of the most popular contemporary surveys of American history. In July 1965, after its first eleven weeks on the best-seller list, the *Oxford History* had already sold sixty thousand copies in hardback. Two hundred fifty thousand more were printed for the Book-of-the-Month Club, and it has since been widely read in paperback as well. Morison had a reputation (and deservedly so) as one of the finest historians of this century. What did all of those readers learn from Morison about Calvin Coolidge? If they made it to page 933 of the *Oxford History*, they learned that Coolidge, the second of the three "inept" Republican presidents of the twenties, was mean, thin-lipped, little, mediocre, parsimonious, not as bright as people thought, dour, unimaginative, abstemious, frugal, unpretentious, taciturn, an admirer of wealthy men, reactionary, a cynical doubter of the progressive movement, and democratic only by habit not by conviction. As president, Coolidge exalted inactivity. He took it easy in the White House with a long nap every afternoon. He maintained his feeble health by riding on a mechanical horse. On the positive side, Coolidge had a moral integrity that was lacking in Harding.

The *Oxford History*, as it happens, ends with a description of another president from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy.

President Kennedy was remarkable not only for his courage and wisdom in meeting the challenges of our day; he chose to take the most important steps ever made by a President of the United States to foster literature and the arts. . . . He did his best to impart to the public his respect for excellence and dislike of mediocrity.

He and Jackie "were the first presidential couple within the memory of White House gardeners to care about the flower gardens." They surrounded themselves with "gay, active, intelligent people." "At the same

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time they were an image of the typical American family, frolicking with their children and taking pleasure trips to the country." "Everything that the Kennedys did was done with grace, elegance, and style, and it all seemed natural, not forced." "The memory of that bright, vivid personality, that great gentleman whose every act and appearance appealed to our pride and gave us fresh pride in ourselves and our country, will live in us for a long, long time." The *Oxford History* ends with the score of *Camelot*: "Ask every person if he's heard the story; and tell it strong and clear if he has not: That once there was a fleeting wisp of glory—called Camelot."

The high duty of the historian, as opposed to the politician, is to eschew caricature in the name of truth. He wishes to see, and to present, things as they are. This is particularly difficult in the writing of recent history because the historian's own political passions are likely to be engaged. The conscientious historian, therefore, takes special care to draw his heroes and villains true to life. Such care is perhaps more evident in our own times than it was formerly, given the professionalization of history. In the writing of history, writes Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "our taste today is more fastidious, our canons of scholarship more rigorous, our partialities more contained, our diagnosis more complex, our judgment more tolerant."

When it comes to Calvin Coolidge, though, one wonders whether Schlesinger's description of contemporary historiography holds true. Coolidge has been subjected to more ridicule perhaps than any other president in American history. His policies are regarded by most historians as beneath contempt. The passages quoted above from Nevins, Commager, and Morison are far from objective. And by objective I do not mean value-free. No one is asserting that historians should be neutral toward men and policies. On the contrary, the duty of the historian, like that of the politician or the citizen, is to take sides. But the historian is in a more fortunate situation than is the politician. The historian is not caught in the rush and uncertainty of great events; he is not compelled to strive for immediate political victories or advantages; he is free of the successful politician's necessary deference to the opinions of his constituents. The historian is to the politician much as the judge is to the lawyer. They both take sides, but the lawyer takes one side from the outset and strives with all his might to make it prevail, while the judge takes sides only after giving a fair and full hearing to all parties involved. Has Calvin Coolidge had such a hearing from our leading historians?

Perhaps the most memorable historical sketch of Calvin Coolidge is to be found in *The Crisis of the Old Order,* the first volume in Arthur Schlesinger's *Age of Roosevelt.* Coolidge is interesting to Schlesinger less in himself than as a symbol of American conservatism more generally.

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Schlesinger understands twentieth-century American conservatism as rigid ideological opposition to the moderate and pragmatic tradition of liberal reform in America.

According to Schlesinger, such progress as is possible in a democracy is smoothest when it issues from a creative tension between a right and a left whose tempers are empirical rather than ideological, whose goals and expectations are moderate, and whose love of the common good is strong. But the story of American conservatism, he believes, has too often been the story of rigid, ideologically motivated opposition to change. American conservatism is a dam without sluices thrown across the river of history. Moreover, the conservative ideology reflects the mentality of the possessing class in America. Schlesinger deplores the acquisitive character of American conservatism and its tendency to promote the interests of businessmen and the rich at the expense of the common good.

These two themes—the curse of ideology and the curse of acquisitiveness—are vividly personified, in *The Crisis of the Old Order,* in the characterizations of Herbert Hoover and Calvin Coolidge, the spokesmen for an idea whose time had gone. In Schlesinger's view, Hoover was a tragic figure in American conservatism, and Coolidge a comic one. Hoover was, or became, an ideologue, who did not sufficiently understand that all ideas must be scrutinized regularly to see whether they have outlived their usefulness. Progress in politics—to the extent that it is possible—depends upon the shattering of complacency. If we make it our business to challenge our own complacency unceasingly, then we shall perhaps avoid the trauma of having events challenge it for us. This was the trauma and the tragedy of Herbert Hoover, a man of high ideals, flawed by his self-righteousness and cast down by events.

The tragic figure of Hoover contrasts with the comic figure of Calvin Coolidge, the smugly self-righteous little man of low ideals. Coolidge transformed the dollar into the Almighty Dollar and worshipped unceasingly at its altar. Schlesinger's discussion of the political thought and the personality of Calvin Coolidge covers about three pages of *The Crisis of the Old Order.* It follows a quotation from Dwight Morrow in which Coolidge is described as the man of character America needed in the oily wake of Teapot Dome. Schlesinger is interested, in the face of that claim, to see what kind of man Coolidge was. He adduces the testimony of three witnesses (aside from a brief remark by the British ambassador) to show us what Coolidge was like. The first is Arthur Vandenberg, who tells us that Coolidge was "unimpressive" as vice-president. The second is William Allen White, whose testimony is taken from a letter in which White compares Coolidge to old Scrooge. The final witness is Ike Hoover, the White House usher, who tells all about Coolidge's odd and distasteful personal habits. One might wish that Schlesinger had canvassed

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a somewhat wider sample of Coolidge's contemporaries, but we must work with what we have been given.

Schlesinger begins his depiction of Coolidge's political career thus:

> Entering law and politics in Massachusetts, he had always been competent, taciturn, and safe. The Boston police strike gave him as governor an accidental reputation for swift decision and made him Vice-President. But he had had little impact on Washington. According to a young Republican editor in Michigan named Arthur H. Vandenberg, Coolidge was "so unimpressive" that he would probably have been denied renomination.

This tightly written little paragraph, unflattering to Coolidge, suggests to the reader the following chain of events: An unimpressive governor by accident became vice-president, and an unimpressive vice-president by the accident of death became president. The reader is not surprised then to be told, a bit later, that the man who was unimpressive as governor and vice-president proved to be unimpressive as president. ("As President, he dedicated himself to inactivity.")

The reader may or may not be aware that Schlesinger is simply repeating the standard interpretation of Coolidge's career offered a half-century ago by Coolidge's political enemies. But what reasons has the reader been given for accepting this interpretation? There are two. First, the reputation Governor Coolidge acquired to the contrary during the Boston police strike was "accidental." Second, Arthur Vandenberg said that Coolidge was an "unimpressive" vice-president.

Let us first take notice of the adjective "accidental." Schlesinger uses it—in the face of contrary opinion—to debunk Coolidge and to establish one of the links in his chain. But the adjective in fact stands there in utter isolation, undocumented, undefended, and unexplained either in the text or in the footnotes. Is this not a curious way for a historian to treat a pivotal and hotly debated episode in a president's career? However that may be, the careful reader will be aware at this point in Schlesinger's narrative that he has only the historian's own opinion as the basis for calling Coolidge's reputation accidental.

The truth is that the Coolidge we see in Schlesinger's passing reference to the police strike is a straw man. Coolidge's reputation was not for "swift" decision but rather for firm and courageous decision. Coolidge himself, in his autobiography, notes that he did not act as swiftly as he was inclined to at the outset of the strike. But in his commitment to certain principles, including the principle of rule by law, he was absolutely unwavering before, during, and after the strike. It was this, not the speed of his actions, which made him a national hero.

Coolidge was far from being a Lincoln, but he did possess something of Lincoln's genius for persuasively compressing reams of argument into

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a sentence. Thus when challenged by Samuel Gompers, Governor Coolidge electrified the nation with his words: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by any body, any where, any time." Coolidge's initial watchfulness, his decisive intervention, and his moral firmness in speech and deed were fixtures of his conduct, then and always. In this sense his nomination for vice-president was by no means accidental.

All we are left with, then, aside from Schlesinger's own opinion, is the opinion of Arthur Vandenberg, who said that Coolidge was unimpressive as vice-president. Never mind that vice-presidents typically have little impact on Washington. Never mind that the foothold of vice-presidents is notoriously insecure. Never mind that this is simply one man's opinion. Let us assume, with Schlesinger, that Arthur Vandenberg's opinion of Coolidge is worth hearing.

It happens that Schlesinger likes to get his character witnesses into the witness-box and out again with dispatch. More often than not he is loathe to quote even as much as a single sentence from his source; he prefers to quote phrases or snippets. In the present example, we are left with the phrase "so unimpressive" ringing in our ears. But this technique sometimes fails to capture the full flavor of a more extensive quotation. Vandenberg actually had more to say about Coolidge than comes across in Schlesinger's account. In his book, *The Trail of a Tradition*, Vandenberg wrote:

> Death put its tragic hand upon President Harding before his work was done. Succeeding him came a quiet, modest, unperturbable New Englander who—while so unimpressive as Vice-President that he probably would have been denied re-nomination even for second place, had his chief survived—*has captured the well-nigh universal imagination of the people* in his unruffled, common sense dependabilities in the *higher station* which he now occupies *in his own right.* The character of President Calvin Coolidge partakes the atmosphere of those granite hills that gave him birth. *He never shirks a rendezvous with duty.* He came to maturity in a sector of the nation which not only is rich in intimate tradition, but also believes in keeping green the laurel of these patriotic memories. *It is inevitable that all worthy tradition in his keeping shall be safe. It is certain that the trail will not wander while his compass points the onward press.* (Italics mine.)

One wonders what induced Schlesinger to reach into this garish heap of accolades and pluck out the single parenthetical fleck of dung with which to besmirch Coolidge. Professor Schlesinger's selectivity puts him in the role of a prosecutor who wrenches one damaging remark out of a witness's mouth and then shuts him up before he can say anything else. But now that the first witness for the prosecution has been cross-examined, let us call in the next.

In the very next paragraph Schlesinger continues to quote fragments.

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His speeches offered his social philosophy in dry pellets of aphorism. "The chief business of the American people," he said, "is business." But, for Coolidge, business was more than business; it was a religion; and to it he committed all the passion of his arid nature. "The man who builds a factory," he wrote, "builds a temple. . . . The man who works there worships there." He felt these things with a fierce intensity. William Allen White, who knew him well, called him a mystic, a whirling dervish of business, as persuaded of the divine character of wealth as Lincoln had been of the divine character of man, "crazy about it, sincerely, genuinely, terribly crazy."

"William Allen White, *who knew him well. . . .*" This fine phrase lends authority to Mr. White's opinions and justifies Schlesinger in citing them. He knew him well. In fact, White had not been an intimate of Coolidge before he became president. "I met him," says White, "in the White House in December, 1924." This was a mere fifteen months before White wrote the letter that Schlesinger quotes, during which time White and Coolidge met only twice more, and on one of those occasions they had only a brief chat. But aside from the spurious fact that White knew Coolidge well, what reasons are we given for respecting his opinions about Coolidge?

Suppose that a historian were to write a short sketch of the ideas and personality of, say, Franklin Roosevelt. Suppose that he quoted from someone (there were many) who believed that Mr. Roosevelt was "unimpressive" before he became president. Suppose that he then quoted from someone who disliked Roosevelt (there were many) in order to document his vices (for example, he was an adulterer) and his eccentricities (for example, he was superstitious). Suppose that the historian then concluded, after a few out-of-context snippets from Roosevelt's social philosophy, with the following (authentic) quotation from William Allen White, who knew him well ("my old friend Bill White," as FDR once called him).

> He is in no sense democratic. Neither is he a free spirit. He is a bound and chained patrician who must give benevolences and issue commands—and not work with those who are trying to achieve a better social order. I think he has a God complex. Once in ancient Egypt a ruler hired his parrot to cry, "Hano is God!" all day long. It seems to me that Roosevelt with his court and his astrologers and jesters is making Hano's mistake.

Apparently Roosevelt was as persuaded of the divine character of himself as Coolidge was of the divine character of wealth! What would Arthur Schlesinger, winner of the Bancroft Award, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, consecrated to the historian's classical ideal of objectivity, say about such a sketch? What would anyone say?

Let us take a moment to examine White's view of Coolidge, since it is White's biography of Coolidge, more than any other, that has molded

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subsequent opinion about the man. In writing to a friend, White compared Coolidge to old Scrooge: "I didn't expect you to like the Coolidge book, and yet I do think the old man is a mystic. Old Scrooge was a mystic. He had faith in the divine character of wealth as much as Lincoln had in the divine character of man. He and Coolidge both believe that Commerce is a sacrosanct matter."

Scrooge, of course, was the mean-spirited miser who loved money for its own sake. Thus White, in his book *Calvin Coolidge: The Man Who Is President*, describes Coolidge as follows: "But one can be a mystic, indeed one can be as fanatic as a dervish or a dreamer and still believe in the mysticism which *justifies business for its own sake.* Coolidge exalts the ideals of the peddler, the horse trader, the captain of industry." (Italics mine.)

Coolidge has "a mystic faith in the righteousness of a swap." Coolidge "believes in the power of the esoteric and mystical qualities of business to produce a happy people." Coolidge has "faith in the Divine ordination of wealth to rule the world and promote civilized progress. . . ." Schlesinger follows White: Coolidge worshipped business; business for him was a religion; Coolidge fanatically consecrated himself to the prestige of the business community. And are not White and Schlesinger supported by Coolidge's own words? "The chief business of the American people is business." What more needs to be said?

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be said is that this aphorism, much ridiculed and much maligned, is the precise truth. America *is* a commercial republic. Now, just as fifty years ago, the principal activity of the American people is business. This is *not* to say—and Coolidge *never* said—that business is the highest activity in America, or that it ought to be pursued for its own sake, or that it will automatically secure for us the good life. Coolidge seems to be Coolidge the Philistine only because White and Schlesinger will not let him get a word in edgewise. Let him here speak for himself, as he did in his book *Foundations of the Republic:*

> After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and prospering in the world. I am strongly of the opinion that the great majority of people will always find these are moving impulses of our life. . . . Wealth is the product of industry, ambition, character and untiring effort. In all experience, the accumulation of wealth means the multiplication of schools, the increase of knowledge, the dissemination of intelligence, the encouragement of science, the broadening of outlook, the expansion of liberties, the widening of culture. Of course, *the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence.* But we are compelled to recognize it is *a* means to well-nigh every desirable achievement. So long as wealth is made the means and not the end, we need not greatly fear it. (Italics mine.)

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Coolidge's attitude toward money-making and wealth is the commonsensical one—namely, that wealth is justified only as a means to higher ends: hospitals, schools, museums, et cetera. William Allen White would have us believe that Coolidge thought justice "in some occult way" would be "secreted" from the activity of the peddler and the captain of industry. This is false. Coolidge's clear position was that wealth cannot be accumulated or preserved, in the long run, outside of a framework provided by liberal culture and the more mundane virtues—for example, "the homely fundamental virtue" of economy. Culture and virtue produce wealth; wealth does not produce them. Wealth is merely a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for progress. But wealth does provide, in its turn, the leisure and the wherewithal to pursue, for instance, a liberal education, which is among the noblest ends of man.

The common sense of the matter is illustrated perfectly by Coolidge's own background. Many a God-fearing man of sturdy character, in Coolidge's experience, had scratched a living and a little more out of the soil in order to send his son to school, where the young man could add to the virtues of character those of intellect. There is nothing esoteric or mystical about this process at all. Nor were these mere Coolidgean platitudes, issuing from the mouth but not the heart. Coolidge himself was as well educated as any president elected since. Even as an adult he would spend evenings translating Cicero and Dante from the original into English. (The mind simply balks when requested to produce the image of LBJ, Nixon, or Ford hunched over their Dante.) On many occasions Coolidge wrote movingly about the poetry of Homer and Shakespeare and the Bible. He was, as well, a competent and facile writer of English prose, a fact attested to by many of his contemporaries, including H. L. Mencken and Charles and Mary Beard, but ignored by most recent historians. His prose is not inferior to that of any of his successors, nor is it inferior to that of most of those historians who pass him off as a Philistine, a boorish celebrant of acquisitiveness. Far from exalting the ideals of the captain of industry, Coolidge again and again lamented that America was "falling away from this ideal" of a liberal education.

> Great captains of industry who have aroused the wonder of the world by their financial success would not have been captains at all had it not been for the generations of liberal culture in the past and the existence all about them of a society permeated, inspired, and led by the liberal culture of the present. If it were possible to strike out that factor from present existence, he would find all the value of his great possessions diminish to the vanishing point, and he himself would be but a barbarian among barbarians.

The blessings of a free republic, including the promotion of literature and the arts,

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are not to be inquired of for gain or profit, though without them all gain and all profit would pass away. They will not be found in the teachings devoted exclusively to commercialism, though without them commerce would not exist. These are the higher things of life. Their teaching has come to us from the classics. If they are to be maintained they will find their support in the institutions of the liberal arts. When we are drawing away from them we are drawing away from the path of security and progress.

But let us return to Schlesinger's narrative. In the final paragraph of his review of Coolidge's social philosophy, he makes four assertions about Coolidge. Each is "documented" with a short phrase or sentence from Coolidge himself, but in no case—except the last—do the quotations justify the charges.

As he worshipped business, so he detested government. "If the Federal Government should go out of existence, the common run of people would not detect the difference in the affairs of their daily life for a considerable length of time." The federal government justified itself only as it served business. "The law that builds up the people is the law that builds up industry." And the chief way by which the federal government could serve business was to diminish itself; "the Government can do more to remedy the economic ills of the people by a system of rigid economy in public expenditure than can be accomplished through any other action." Economy was his self-confessed obsession; it was "idealism in its most practical form"; it was the "full test of our national character."

It is a wary reader indeed who will not surrender to the drift of this last sentence. Coolidge does not say that economy is idealism in its only form, or its purest form, or its highest form; it is merely idealism in its most mundane, *practical* form. In context, Coolidge's aphorism is both perfectly clear and perfectly true:

I favor the policy of economy, not because I wish to save money, but because I wish to save people. The men and women of this country who toil are the ones who bear the cost of the Government. Every dollar that we *carelessly waste* means that their life will be so much the more meager. Every dollar that we save means that their life will be so much the more abundant. Economy is idealism in its most practical form. (Italics mine.)

If Coolidge had said, as Schlesinger states, that economy "was *the* 'full test of our national character,' " then he might justly be accused of an obsession with economy. But Coolidge did not say that. He said that economy was "*a* full test of our national character." (Italics mine.) Only by this small distortion can Schlesinger prove that Coolidge had a self-confessed obsession with economy. It is necessary also for Schlesinger to omit the continuation of the president's remarks: "I would not be misunderstood. I am not advocating parsimony. I want to be liberal. Public service is entitled to a suitable reward."

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But "at this time and under present circumstances," said Coolidge, economy is important. He regarded it as a manifestation of the virtue of self-control, which lies at the heart of self-government. Perhaps this idea was so incomprehensible to Schlesinger in 1957 that he could not do justice to it. But the fact that economy is a full test of our national character, and hence of self-government, is a commonplace, a platitude, in the year 1981. That there are other, and greater, tests of national character was, of course, known to Coolidge, and is nothing to the point.

"The federal government justified itself only as it served business," Schlesinger charges Coolidge with believing. Before proceeding to an analysis of this charge, the reader should be cautioned. When Coolidge speaks of business he usually does not wish to be understood as speaking of a separate class with distinct interests. He usually means "the work of the world" or the commercial enterprise as a whole. "Business" for him was an all-inclusive term that included labor, farmers, businessmen, et cetera. If one does not know this, one is liable to be misled by fragmentary quotations.

Calvin Coolidge never said that the federal government justified itself *only* as it served "business." Schlesinger attributes this sentiment to Coolidge on the basis of the following quotation: "The law that builds up the people is the law that builds up industry." The reader may be interested to know that Schlesinger, despite his attachment to scholarly rigor, does not bother to tell us where to find this remark by Coolidge, a remark which taken out of context might as well be a Delphic oracle, for all the meaning it imparts. It happens that the remark is taken from a speech delivered in 1916 and reprinted in Coolidge's book *Have Faith in Massachusetts* (1919) and the "federal government" is not explicitly mentioned. Moreover, the "law" to which Coolidge refers is not federal legislation, or any positive law whatsoever, but economic and social "law." There is nothing whatever in the speech about the federal government serving business. In fact, the only reference at all in the speech to the federal government is an oblique one in which Coolidge, having deplored that under the influence of prosperity "men came to think that prosperity was the chief end of man and grew arrogant in the use of its power," defends the anti-trust laws.

> They are sound in theory. Their assemblances of wealth are broken up because they were assembled for an unlawful purpose. It is the purpose that is condemned. You men who represent our industries can see that there is the same right to disperse unlawful assembling of wealth or power that there is to disperse a mob that has met to lynch or riot.

Schlesinger, far from exerting himself to master his own partisan passions, has dug up an obscure sentence from Coolidge, has refused to tell

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his readers where he got it, has used it to prove something that it does not prove either by itself or in its original context, and has ignored an explicit assertion by Coolidge—not that the federal government exists only to serve business, but that the government exists in part to regulate, to check, and to discipline business.

Schlesinger's Coolidge is a man who sometimes advocated a laissez-faire attitude toward government, so as to give business a free rein, and who sometimes advocated special government privileges for business—the tariff, for example. The unifying motivation for this two-faced Coolidge, that which makes his political career a consistent whole, is his devotion to business. As Schlesinger put it in his book *The Vital Center:* "The Progressive bolt left the plutocracy in unchallenged control of Republicanism. Never in American history have any administrations served the business community so faithfully—one might say so obsequiously—as the Republican administrations of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover." Schlesinger defines plutocracy as "a possessing class founded, not upon the complex values of status which arise in a stable and independent society, but on the naked accumulation of money." Coolidge's presidency, therefore, was in the service of the naked accumulation of money.

Schlesinger has every right to make this argument. He is free to try to prove that Coolidge was a conscious or unconscious hypocrite, that he said one thing and did another. But he is *not* free to assert that Coolidge articulated his political principles as Schlesinger articulates them. Coolidge never claimed to be the servant of the business class or the plutocracy. He was not "crazy" about wealth. He never claimed to worship business, or to detest government, or to believe that government exists only to serve business. Schlesinger splices quotations, he changes words, he quotes out of context, he offers up irrelevant bits and pieces—all this to condemn Coolidge out of Coolidge's own mouth. But the real Calvin Coolidge is not the man we see after he has been filtered through the imagination of our historians. Schlesinger would have us believe that business was running the country in the twenties and that agriculture, labor, and other groups were outside the orbit of the business classes. Here is Schlesinger's Coolidge confirming this analysis in *The Crisis of the Old Order:*

> "Never before, here or anywhere else," added the *Wall Street Journal,* "has a government been so completely fused with business." From his side, Calvin Coolidge confirmed the alliance. "This is a business country," he said, ". . . and it wants a business government."

Why is the ellipsis there? Why did Schlesinger quote only a single sentence from the president? Was it from a desire to make his diagnosis more complex? Here is the real Coolidge:

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This is a business country, pre-eminent in all kinds of business, industrial *and* agricultural, and it wants a business government.

I do *not* mean by that a government *by* business, nor a government *for* business, but I do mean a government that will *understand* business. I mean a government able to establish the best possible relations between the *people* in their business capacity and the people in their social capacity. (Italics mine.)

Did Coolidge himself ever say that government and business were "fused" or that they had formed an "alliance"? The following is a sample of his thoughts on that very possibility:

When we contemplate the enormous power, autocratic and uncontrolled, which would have been created by joining the authority of government with the influence of business, we can better appreciate the wisdom of the fathers in their wise dispensation which made Washington the political center of the country and left New York to develop into its business center.

When government comes unduly under the influence of business, the tendency is to develop an administration which closes the door of opportunity; becomes narrow and selfish in its outlook, and results in oligarchy. When government enters the field of business with its great resources, it has a tendency to extravagance and inefficiency, but, having the power to crush all competitors, likewise closes the door of opportunity and results in monopoly.

Call Coolidge a hypocrite, if you think you can prove it, but do not ascribe to him sentiments which he never uttered.

"As he worshipped business, so he detested government." The quotation from Coolidge that allegedly proves this assertion is as follows: "If the Federal Government should go out of existence, the common run of people would not detect the difference in the affairs of their daily life for a considerable length of time." Where in this sentence is there anything about detesting government? On its face, the sentence fails to accomplish the task Schlesinger assigns it. Coolidge is simply stating a fact—namely, that under the federal system (as it then stood) the states were more intimately involved with the daily affairs of the people than was the federal government. In context this is obvious, but once again Schlesinger fails to supply us with the context, and once again he conveniently fails to footnote the quotation, so that the reader might consider the context for himself.

The States are the sheet anchors of our institutions. If the Federal Government should go out of existence, the common run of people would not detect the difference in the affairs of their daily life for a considerable length of time. But if the authority of the States were struck down disorder approaching chaos would be upon us in twenty-four hours.

To say that certain governmental powers are best exercised at the

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state or local level may be wrong, but it is surely not the equivalent of detesting government as such. Moreover, by speaking of the states as "the sheet anchors of our institutions," Coolidge implies that the federal government is the main anchor of those institutions.

During his political service in Massachusetts, Coolidge was not a member of the Old Guard; he was a mild progressive. He was by no means a rigid ideological opponent of government. He did believe, when president, that prudence required strong emphasis upon economy and tax reduction in the aftermath of World War I. But as a prudent man he also knew that other circumstances might justify opposite policies.

Schlesinger, not content merely to set forth Coolidge's political opinions, proceeded from the issues to a presentation of Coolidge's character: "As President, he dedicated himself to inactivity. 'No other President in my time,' said the White House usher, 'ever slept so much.' In his dozen or so waking hours, he did as little as possible."

The White House usher had said that Coolidge slept an average of eleven hours a day. Schlesinger amends this to a "dozen or so." But Schlesinger also implies that one can tell how hard Coolidge worked ("he dedicated himself to inactivity") on the basis of how long he slept. This conclusion, however, does not emerge from the account given by the White House usher. The usher says that Coolidge could be found in the Executive Office three or four times a day on Sundays and holidays, and he confirms Coolidge's claim that he worked there in the evenings as well. (Woodrow Wilson, in contrast, never worked on Saturday or Sunday, and before the war he never worked more than three or four hours a day.) But why didn't Schlesinger seize on this opportunity to quote William Allen White, who knew Coolidge well? White said that Coolidge at fifty-nine looked like a man of seventy. "The impact of his Presidential responsibilities had weighted him down." White quoted Mrs. Coolidge: "The death of our younger son was a severe shock and the zest of living never was the same to him afterward." Others have speculated that Coolidge, who never enjoyed robust health, long suffered from a heart condition that drained his strength. Whatever the cause, Coolidge aged greatly during his presidency. If he had chosen to serve another term, he would have died in office. It goes without saying that most historians, despite these facts, depict Coolidge as a man who for five years hibernated in the White House.

President Coolidge carried himself with dignity. He had the reputation of a man of character. William Allen White has set down some of his impressions of Mr. Coolidge:

> Here was a shy man . . . here was a kindly man, grateful and sentimental . . . here was a trained mind; a studious, competent man, tenacious of facts, and ca-

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pable of coordinating them into a hypothesis that made truth as he saw it . . . here was a man whose social graces were not formal, but were based upon an instinctive desire to be pleasant rather than punctilious . . . here was a gentle and loyal friend.

In the following description of Coolidge by Schlesinger, which is based largely upon the observations of the White House usher, are any of Coolidge's admirable traits in evidence? Or is not the whole effect of the paragraph to strip Coolidge of whatever dignity he possessed, to reveal him as mean, eccentric, and ridiculous?

The main social events at the White House in Coolidge's time were his breakfasts: pancakes with Vermont maple syrup, served promptly at eight, his large white collies wandering about the room or licking the sugar out of the bottom of his coffee cup. On other mornings, he ate breakfast in his bedroom while a valet rubbed his head with vaseline. When his faith was not involved, he watched life with a quizzical air. His humor was mordant and unpredictable. His eyes sometimes shone with the peculiar gleam of a parrot about to give someone a tweak; and then deadly remarks snapped out of compressed lips; or, in a mood of aimless mischief, he might play unfunny practical jokes on the Secret Service men. He could be irascible and nasty, straining all the understanding of his gracious wife. In the memory of the White House usher, Theodore Roosevelt in his worst rage was placid compared with Coolidge.

"The main social events at the White House. . . ." One suspects this is supposed to be a joke. If so, it is as unfunny as some of Coolidge's pranks. Needless to say, the main social events at the Coolidge White House were the usual ones, and the Coolidges were the hosts for a glamorous succession of notables, from the Queen of England to the Queen of Rumania, from the Prince of Wales to Charles Lindbergh. As for Coolidge's humor, it was the opinion of William Allen White that Coolidge had a fine sense of humor. If Schlesinger may cite the White House usher, certainly it ought to be permitted to cite the White House maid!

I used to ask Mama if the President were really as stern and sour-faced as he looked in pictures, and she would assure me that he was not.

"That's just his way, and he has the public fooled," she said, "but he has the best sense of humor and makes more people laugh than any of the other Presidents I've known."

Humor, no doubt, is one of those subjects upon which opinions can differ. Coolidge's practical jokes, for example, may not be to everyone's taste, though they were surely less juvenile and less sadistic than, say, pushing someone in full evening dress into a swimming pool. It all depends on your point of view.

"He could be irascible and nasty, straining all the understanding of

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his gracious wife." This is one of my favorite lines in Schlesinger's entire corpus, but not just because it gives an especially flat glimpse of cardboard Coolidge. Rather, it is one of those marvelous criticisms which, as stated, might apply equally well to every married man in the history of the world.

But William Allen White presents another side to Coolidge's relation to his wife:

> Here is a flash into the heart of Calvin Coolidge, irritable probably, peevish sometimes, not above the petty cruelties of a repressed and sublimated inner wrath, but still always loyal, always deeply affectionate and through it all profoundly devoted. In the various loyalties of Calvin Coolidge, and he had many and they were strong, none was more beautiful than his loyalty to this woman.

"In the memory of the White House usher. . . ." At long last we begin to weary of this usher. If Coolidge had been president in distant antiquity, if the records of that age had been lost, if this book by the White House usher were the only surviving record of that age, would we not regret the sparseness of the historical record, and would we not exercise great caution in our judgment of Coolidge? What could be said of a historian who, having at his disposal a diverse cache of documents from that distant age, chose to ignore them, and instead based his portrait of Coolidge upon the churlish recollections of the White House usher?

Throughout his career Schlesinger has inveighed against the intrusion of ideology into the political consciousness. Ideology, he contends, is unfaithful to the richness and diversity of the political phenomena. But what is Schlesinger himself if not the incarnation of ideology? American conservatism, he tells us again and again, is typically animated by selfish, shortsighted, anti-social greed. American history is the continuing struggle between the plutocrats—the forces of darkness—and the people.

To the non-ideologue it is unclear at first how Calvin Coolidge would fit into such a cramped interpretation. Whatever the ultimate merits of his political opinions and policies, Coolidge was a decent and dignified man, as learned as any president since, intensely patriotic, and possessed of a profoundly democratic soul. The people elected him to office every time save one that he presented himself for their judgment. The people elected him president by an enormous majority.

But if the man does not readily fit into a cast-iron interpretation of American history, he certainly will after Procrustes is through with him. A bit of chopping, a bit of stretching, and Coolidge appears as a mean little Philistine, a high priest of the golden calf, a willing tool of the plutocracy, a whirling dervish of business, a bleak fanatic, arid, smug, self-centered and self-satisfied, irascible and nasty.

As such at least he appears in the pages of a prize-winning historian.

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Bats in the House

ROBERT CORDING

Its face, prehistoric, looks down and down.

Then my father is striking and striking.
On the floor, the humped back fluttering like breath.

So it died.
I watched my father carry it out the door,
away forever.

When it came back it was fear
of a parent awaiting his first born.

It crawled across the ceiling, a deformed child.
Such fur on the cheeks, such wrinkled skin.
I could not love it.

The third time is worse. It is the sudden twitching
of middle-aged muscle gone awry,
incurable breakdown.

By this time I know there's no end to it.

I leave it above me
resigned that one way or another—
I have opened all the windows and doors
and now I begin to look—

it will fly away on its own
or the longer I look, the more it will change
into something better.

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TEACHING

Jacob Viner

DONALD WINCH

Adam Smith maintained that nature had implanted in most men a stronger instinct of parental concern than of filial respect. After all, the continuance of the species did not depend on the latter instinct; if nature could be relied upon, it would not be necessary to resort, as in the Decalogue, to exhortations to respect parents. Jacob Viner, with his immense knowledge of both Smith and providentialist thinking, would have enjoyed assessing the merits of this argument. But does Smith's maxim apply to the generation and preservation of the species produced by the scholarly world of teachers and pupils? Except in the dubious case of those teachers who consciously seek to reproduce themselves by collecting disciples, the maxim might be reversed: great scholars acquire a natural filial respect even when they do not seek it—or, as in Viner's case, when they seem to go out of their way to avoid it.

I was, so to speak, a child of Viner's immediate pre-retirement years, perhaps the very last of a breed whose daunting lineage stretched back through ten years at Princeton and thirty more at Chicago. When I arrived in Princeton from the London School of Economics in 1956, Viner must have been looking forward to his retirement in four years' time, awaiting the freedom from teaching that would enable him to devote all his energies to what proved to be a remarkably ambitious and productive period of research and publication. He was distinctly evasive about acquiring any new obligation of scholarly parenthood—or so it struck me when I chose to write a dissertation within his main field of interest. Since my choice was the result of an unintended seduction practiced on an unpromising subject, I must record how it came about.

When I was awarded a fellowship to study economics for a year in an American university, I chose to go to Princeton because Viner was one of the names I had come across on my undergraduate reading lists. It was a fortunate but hardly a well-informed decision. Like so many English students given visiting scholarships at that time, I did not, initially at least, look much beyond the opportunity to spend a stimulating year in the United States. I was not committed to academic life, and it would have been overly sanguine to form such a commitment in those pre-expansion days, when there were so few university posts in Britain. Moreover, the London School of Economics, despite its other merits, did not provide its commuting undergraduates with much foretaste of academic life outside the library and the lecture theater. I may have had a vague notion about joining one of the international economic agencies. I had certainly specialized in international economics and had probably glanced at Viner's magnum opus, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade.* I knew a little more about Viner's pioneering contribution to customs union theory, mainly because my professor at LSE, James Meade, had recently lectured and written on the subject, treating it as one of the more interesting applications of the theory of second best. I may also have come across a reference to Viner's study, *Canada's Balance of International Indebtedness*—his dissertation topic written under Frank Taussig at Harvard—but in my fellowship application it was more pretentious ignorance than guile

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which made me say that I was interested in the transfer problem created by current U.S.–Canadian economic relations. One had to say something, and I had obtained a good mark for an essay on the transfer problem written a few months before.

Toward the end of my first year at Princeton I decided that the solitary pose of visiting dilettante was rather pointless, especially in the small annual intake of fifteen or so graduate students. There was so little to return home for, and so much that was serious going on around me. For example, the Suez fiasco: How could one brought up in Britain be taken completely unawares by such a colossal and humiliating political error? Viner's course on international trade theory, given in the spring semester, confirmed my need for serious commitment.

Before Viner's first appearance, there was a considerable buildup of rumor and awed expectation. In a small department he was, with the possible exception of Oskar Morgenstern, the senior international figure; and he still carried with him from Chicago a reputation for striking terror into graduate students, who were either underprepared or born with insufficient mental equipment. I had overcome the initial English shock of having my teachers call me by my first name, but none of us expected Viner to call us by anything but our last names, and most of us hoped not to be noticed at all. The atmosphere in his seminars was one of respectful silence from the audience, and we were greatly relieved when we realized that we were not going to be put through our paces each week on our knowledge of the assigned reading. Perhaps "they" were right in saying that he had mellowed since his fierce Chicago days, but none of us felt like taking chances.

Viner was a small, alert, gnomelike figure ("bantam cock" was Paul Samuelson's description of him twenty years earlier). A suggestion of absentmindedness about his dress extended to the pipe that he filled and smoked with considerable inefficiency, chiefly because it got in the way of his flow of discourse. The seminar proceedings were oracular in a quietly ruminatory way. They were also absolutely uncompromising: no concession was made by way of introductory remarks to our status as neophytes. On each occasion Viner simply sat down, pulled out a pack of file cards, slipped the retaining band onto his wrist, and began somewhere toward the middle of a theoretical discourse or scholarly debate. This did not matter very much with regard to his course on international trade—where he assumed that we, like himself, would use his *Studies* as a point of departure from which assaults could be made on more recent literature. We certainly spent a good deal of time going through some of the knottier topics in the *Studies*, such as alternative measures of the terms of trade, "real" versus opportunity costs, and customs union theory. On the last of these, as I have mentioned, I thought I knew a thing or two. It was the only occasion on which I allowed myself to think this, and while, of course, I was wrong, it enabled me to learn something about Viner.

James Meade's work on customs unions had expanded Viner's original distinction between trade creation and trade diversion to provide a more general taxonomy of criteria for assessing the gains and losses from the formation of customs unions. I must have demurred slightly at Viner's account of Meade's position, and as soon as I had registered an almost involuntary "Oh, surely . . . " I knew that I was caught. There was no more quiet rumination for the next half hour as Viner pursued me up hill and down dale with arguments that I might have advanced but that would still have been wrong. It was, to say the least, an uneven contest in which I said little while Viner displayed all his dialectical skills, some of which, I felt at the time, were rather unfair. As I remember it, the upshot was that Viner thought Meade guilty of creating some empty analytical boxes and of implicitly lowering the cosmopolitan free trade standards by which customs unions should be judged.

What I learned for the first time was just how much Viner relished argument. He became more animated, his wit and humor were released, and his eyes, the most striking of his features, gleamed. It was a pity that we latecomers were either too much in awe of his reputation or too dull and inexperienced to bring out these qualities more often.

Our deficiencies in this respect were far more obvious in Viner's course on the history of economic thought. I do not think that my memory of Viner's teaching of this course is

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more complete solely because of the way in which my interests developed later. With regard to international trade and to all the other theoretical and applied fields of economics to which he had contributed over the years, my impression was that Viner was becoming something of an elder statesman—drawing on vast experience, reliving some notable battles in which he had taken a prominent part, and keeping abreast of recent developments. While he continued to publish in such fields as the economics of development, monetary control, international economics, and foreign policy, what we heard in his course on the history of economic thought was a mind actively at work on those scholarly questions which were to be his main occupation until his death in 1970. Throughout his career he had taken an interest in such matters; his *Studies* is the only work in economics I can think of which combines theoretical innovation with massive and precise historical scholarship. But by the late fifties he was freer to devote all his attention to what he once described as "vocation combined with vacation," where the latter connoted freedom from the "need of making moral or religious or political or economic judgments as part of [one's] professional task." I will deal with the vocational side of things later.

We would have to have been quite extraordinary as students, let alone as would-be economists with rudimentary historical knowledge of any kind, to appreciate fully what was being offered. How could we have been prepared for such a scholarly tour de force, with no *tour d'horizon* features and none of those concessions to present-mindedness that most universities still use as the main justification for keeping the history of economic thought on the economics curriculum? We were plunged directly into primary texts and the most difficult interpretative literature on figures, schools, and issues—the relevance of which to all but the most broad-minded of economists was often difficult to fathom. Was John Gillies, who translated Aristotle's *Ethics* in 1797, correct in believing that Adam Smith had stolen his labor theory of exchange from Aristotle? Did the early Christian fathers believe in heroic charity, and how did the canon law after Aquinas differ from Roman law on questions of property? Was Nicole correct in suggesting that life in a community of saints would not be ideal?

After dealing with the intricacies of the development of usury doctrine we were faced, quite suddenly, with the Reverend Joseph Lee's *Vindication of Regulated Enclosure* (1656) and the disputes that surround the alleged amoral or utilitarian character of his defense. With mercantilist doctrines we entered better-charted economic waters, but these were followed by the nature of Hobbes's materialism and Locke's views on property in civil society. After both Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* and the *Letter to Dion* we arrived at a canter at Hume, Cantillon, Turgot, the Physiocrats, and, above all, *Das Adam Smith Problem.* I don't remember getting much beyond Malthus and Ricardo, though even there we found ourselves reading the pamphlet literature and *Westminster Review* articles. Having read a great deal more of Viner's work, especially that published after his retirement, I can now trace most of the connecting links and understand the aims and methods of his approach to the study of past ideas, but at the time I doubt that I was alone in struggling to make sense of it, item by item.

My decision to write a dissertation on the history of economic thought, therefore, went against all previous form, and it was made in the face of persistent warnings on Viner's part. He would not encourage any economist to risk anything so foolhardy in an increasingly technocratic age, and if I persisted he could not accept much responsibility. During the year in which I worked on the dissertation at Princeton, I never entered his unruly storehouse of an office, though he did once open the door a few inches to receive a draft chapter. Our direct communication took place around the catalogue of Firestone Library, where he was regularly to be found. We also used the internal postal system. I tried to lure him into giving me an opinion of the worth of my work as a whole, but most of his advice consisted of painstaking corrections of my numerous small errors and referring me to an ever-widening circle of additional and highly recondite sources. These I dutifully followed up, even when he suggested that I consult Fortescue's ten-volume *History of the British Army* for a *possible* mil-

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itary analogy to something I wanted to say about balanced growth in the Australian colonies in the 1840s. Only when he was trapped one evening in Berkeley, where I taught the following year, did I manage to get him to express a cautious general opinion. He must have submitted a favorable report to the other examiners, but when I returned to Princeton for my orals, he absented himself on the ground that he had just retired.

If the above recital sounds like a complaint, I have failed to make my point. (It may help if I say that in twenty years of teaching I have been far more scrupulous than Viner in never accepting a single Ph.D. candidate specializing in the history of economic thought.) I record this as evidence of my opening contention that filial respect is a natural gift in some circumstances, even when it is not a natural instinct and is not solicited by the more obvious signs of parental concern. Over the next ten years of transatlantic correspondence and three of four meetings with Viner, I graduated slowly from "Dear Winch" to "Dear Donald." He remained "Professor Viner" to me until I ventured on my first "Dear Jack"; he died before that letter was received. Though leisurely by present standards, the pace seemed entirely proper. For purely selfish reasons I regret there were not more years for that pace, and the consistent underlying warmth, to quicken. I still find it salutory and sobering to speculate whether he would approve of my current work.

Anyone having the slightest acquaintance with the scholarly history of economics, and any of the other branches of intellectual history into which Viner diversified later, will understand the above remark. He was, quite simply, the most comprehensive and meticulous of scholars; he combined encyclopedic knowledge with that rarer gift among historians, analytical acuteness, the legacy of a distinguished career as an economic theorist. With the possible exception of Joseph Schumpeter, I cannot think of any economist-scholar, before or since Viner, who combined these gifts so well, and Schumpeter's historical vision, though not restricted to narrowly defined economic literature, was noticeably less catholic in its criteria of significance. Viner referred us to Schumpeter's *History of Economic Analysis* on many issues, but he also distributed copies of his review article on the book, warning us against Schumpeter's biases and prejudices, particularly against the English classical authors. From what I have said about Viner's course, it is clear that he could not endorse Schumpeter's idealized vision of economic analysis as an autonomous activity—one in which theorizing was depicted, in Viner's opinion, "as a somewhat ethereal activity, without roots in values, without entanglements with other social disciplines, without any contribution to make to the rational selection of social ends."

Given the small numbers of the graduate intake at Princeton in those days (Viner did not give any undergraduate courses), we did not have an opportunity to hear him lecture. He was a particularly good performer when called upon to make an occasional formal address, largely because he could draw on such a wide range of apposite literary and historical allusions. What we heard in his seminars was more akin to argumentative conversation, in which Viner excelled even when he was left to play all the parts in the argument. In actual conversation, he had precious little small talk, and you had to be nimble to get a word in once he was launched. I was happy to get him off on a subject, to listen, and to start another when possible. If it was a monologue then it was a very lively one, swerving to encompass this idea in passing, diving to answer that possible objection, never coasting by on personal anecdotage. There is, however, one anecdote concerning Viner's conversation that rings true on all levels, including the element of self-parody. At a family wedding he was introduced to someone and thought that the person reported his subject to be theology. After Viner had been talking for some time and the party was breaking up, the listener managed to say that, actually, his subject was *ge*ology. Viner's parting response, as they packed him into the car, was, "Well, I'll tell you all about *that* next time."

Letters between fellow workers are far and away the most effective university we have, and Viner responded generously and amazingly promptly to such letters. I say generously because he was anxious to make available to all genuine inquirers the fruits of his own reading and discovery, a desire that quickened as the prospects of his using the material himself receded. His promptness was

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amazing because he kept up a rich and varied correspondence with friends, ex-pupils, and scholars throughout the world, and was literally bombarded with requests for his advice and opinion. His correspondence files over the period 1914 to 1970 provide a unique insight into a mind as well as the national and international community to which it belonged—if only someone could be found with the wit and knowledge to exploit it as such, rather than simply pillaging it for odd items. The same goes for the quarter- to a half-million-card file references now deposited in the Firestone Library at Princeton: a permanent record of a lifetime of reading and inquiry. When I first tried to sort through Viner's papers while spending a year at the Institute for Advanced Study in 1974–75, I felt like a burglar breaking and entering into a sanctum that had been forbidden to me earlier. I was also a little ashamed to find my own importunate letters amidst the mass of other requests for help, and was moved by the generous references he had written in my behalf.

Even if I had not examined the bulk of Viner's papers, his compulsive work habits would have been obvious. In his late seventies, while complaining about the debilitating effect of an aortic aneurysm on his energies, he was spending five hours a day on research and one day a week in the library; and I am told that on his deathbed he was still demanding to know if his daughter had verified some library references he had given her. He knew no other way of life, and only once did I detect a hint of regret—when he warned me not to get the reputation for working in the evenings and on weekends. He said that this had happened to him and, as a result, friends and colleagues had become inhibited about inviting him and his wife out. Having enjoyed the ease of Frances Viner's hospitality and delightful company, I have my doubts about this: she acted as a gentle protectress and mediator for her husband on social occasions. Nevertheless, the warning is linked in my mind with the infrequency of challenge from students when his reputation, particularly for fierceness, had been established. The growing warmth of his letters to me, even the indulgent references he wrote, may reflect something of this. Late children traditionally enjoy such benefits, as poor John Stuart Mill ruefully reflected.

In sifting through Viner's correspondence I was struck by the fact that while he frequently sought the opinion of specialists working on specific topics that interested him, he does not seem to have followed the practice of sending out draft versions of his work for comment, even to close friends. This could be taken as a sign of his autonomy and self-assurance. Another sign could be the fact that he always seems to have taught courses devoted to his current research preoccupations. He clearly enjoyed his rights of trespass into other branches of scholarship, whether classical studies, the history of philosophy and science, Augustan satire, or theology. Given the high standards toward which he always worked, and hence expected of others, it would have been impossible for him to claim more than amateur status outside his special fields of interest. But any expert who took his disclaimers too literally was likely to find himself coping with a discomfitingly well-armed modesty. Viner's love of connoisseurship went hand in hand with his relish for argument. Catching others out went along with a desire not to be caught out in turn.

Viner's autonomy, work ethic, and uncompromising attitude toward students were part of a credo that was both puritanical and catholic, austere yet open-ended. An economist who was close to the center of major developments in the discipline—as well as its application in the fields of government and business up to the early fifties, including two world wars, the New Deal and the Depression of the thirties, the Keynesian revolution, and the beginnings of concern with Third World development—Viner was an active party in many crucial controversies. But he cannot readily be assimilated into any of the dominant schools. His fundamental political and intellectual sympathies were liberal and internationalist, and much of his theoretical work can be described as broadly "neoclassical," with the emphasis perhaps more on the second part of this term. But he was not a "neoliberal" in the Hayekian mold, and he stood outside the Chicago School, despite his long connection with the Department of Economics at the University of Chicago and his editorship of the *Journal of Political Economy* during the period when the doctrines of this school were supposedly being formed. At the same time, he never became committed

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to a pro- or anti-Keynes position in theory or policy, though he did have doubts about Keynesian*ism*. Viner was as distrustful of theoretical fashion as he was of ideological enthusiasm, especially when they supported each other. He respected and contributed to deductive theorizing in economics, but he never lost his suspicion of long chains of monocausal reasoning. Eclecticism in the best sense was the consequence of respect for complexity, and skepticism had to be constructive, never merely iconoclastic.

Although Viner's credo can be documented by reference to his distinguished career as an economist, I believe that it was brought more completely into play by his learned interests, his vocation/vacation spent in pursuit of intellectual history. His precisely measured claims on behalf of such scholarship were outlined in an essay entitled "A Modest Proposal for Some Stress on Scholarship in Graduate Training." The proposal was modest because he did not lay claim to any direct utilitarian benefits. In this respect, scholarship could not be compared with the higher realms of scientific discovery or even creative art. Nor should it be allowed to divert too much attention from the urgent business of the day. Scholarship was neither more nor less than "the pursuit of broad and exact knowledge of the history of the working of the human mind as revealed in the written record." But he regarded the attainment of accuracy and neutrality in reporting dead men's ideas, avoiding distortion, denigration, and undue piety, as "an arduous and difficult art, calling for unintermitting self-discipline." It was chiefly for the instrumental virtues of humility, largeness of view, and skepticism inculcated by such discipline that Viner argued. Reversing another well-known maxim, he maintained that if the wise father knows his own children, it was no less true to say that the wise child should be capable of recognizing its intellectual parentage, not least when it is blemished.

The combination of modest claims with an austere creed concerning standards of reporting and proof made it impossible for Viner to seek disciples, either by offering ready-made historical parallels to present predicaments or by promising to reveal the key to large-scale historical developments. He was critical of the tendency among some leading social and economic historians to claim possession of such a key. He also criticized their propensity to categorize past thinkers on the basis of concordance or lack of concordance with their own political, ethical, and religious values. Viner certainly drew a clear line between his approach to intellectual history and the history of the origins and social consequences of ideas, even though his knowledge of social and economic history, especially of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, was formidable.

But if the ordinance was self-denying on one level, it was humane and expansive on another. It was neither present-minded nor narrowly confined to the boundaries of existing disciplines. It provided a window on a world in which ideas could be urgent, ceremonial, legitimating, and uplifting as well as the source of aesthetic pleasure. Sermons, novels, poetry, satirical tracts, along with the standard treatises could all be examined in the same objective spirit without suggesting they were of equal weight or value for all purposes. Thus Viner's warning to literary critics that Augustan satire, even when practiced by its greatest masters, was not self-certifying still seems worth repeating. Such satire had "no greater magical power to purify its user, and no more visible tendency to be used only in the service of truth, beauty, and virtue, than poetry in general, or prose in general."

Viner considered Arthur Lovejoy's program for the study of unit ideas to be based on an excessively rarefied view of thinking, which was constantly in danger of becoming meaningless when divorced from the contexts or systems in which these malleable building blocks manifest themselves and acquire significance. The history of ideas, he warned, should not become "a lifeless, bloodless, anaemic academic discipline, one which isolates ideas from human minds and passions." Viner certainly practiced all the different approaches to intellectual history himself—examining schools, doctrines, periods, influences, milieus, innovations, and the filiation of individual concepts. And he did so over an immense historical canvas, stretching from early Christian thought through the Enlightenment to the nineteenth century, though only over the second part of this expanse

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did he claim knowledge of all the primary sources relevant to his interests.

The generosity of Viner's historical vision should not be confused with any version of the *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* form of historical relativism—a position which entails the oddity of believing that only one's own period can be convicted of error. As he said, "In moral matters I am a historical relativist of what is perhaps a peculiar kind. I believe that each century except one's own has a right to its abuses, but that no century has an obligation to condemn, to praise, or to offer apologies for another century's lapses from perfection."

I had never examined all the papers left by anybody after his death, let alone someone whose career was both distinguished and significantly connected with a crucial stage of my own life. The question of how one might write a biography based on such material arose quite naturally, if somewhat idly, as it turned out. Viner's letters were so carefully kept and classified that obviously his advice to John Maurice Clark's widow on the importance of preserving her husband's papers for the benefit of future students applied equally to himself. The involvement with public events, the appointments and honors, even the contributions to knowledge—all these posed no problems of principle. But what could one convey about Viner's mind that would obey his criteria for dealing objectively with dead men's ideas without making them seem divorced from ruling passions and values, while at the same time avoiding the sin of reductionism? The limited number of areas in which the knowledge, experience, and underlying sympathies of imagined biographer and subject coincided might be striking, especially when unknown before examining the letters. But this would not carry one far, and might lead in the direction of discipleship, overidentification, and excessive piety both to one's subject and oneself. The more severe test would come from confronting the alien (in the neutral sense) aspects of Viner's mind and interests.

For example, why was Christian theology of such absorbing interest to a skeptic like Viner? In part the answer is obvious: so much of what interested him about European social and economic thought was intimately bound up with religion. Moreover, while he devoted what often seemed to me excessive energies in undermining the scholarly pretensions of the Weber-Tawney thesis, or indeed any simple thesis, Catholic or Protestant, connecting religion and economic life, his interest in theology was not what he would have described as of the Tom Tulliver variety. Thus he would not have said of theology what Tom Tulliver said of birds—that he was "very fond of birds, that is, of throwing stones at them." In company with Hume in this, as on the question of proof versus demonstration, Viner would have said that religion had often been the enemy of morality. Was it significant that he had probably left his native Montreal to get away from a stifling orthodox Jewish home? Why, for that matter, did he classify material on Jewish questions under a cryptic "J" in an otherwise highly explicit filing system? Could one in principle have got him to answer such questions? Were they reductionist in spirit and intent? Whatever may have been the origins of Viner's interest in theology, negative motives could not have sustained it for so long. Once again love of well-conducted argument plays a part, but he also maintained that the best theological writing, like some poetry, was just as remarkable for its objectivity as scientific discourse is normally held to be.

Viner was aware of the pitfall of antiquarianism and scholarship for scholarship's sake. Toward the end of his life—with respect to his projected book *Religious Thought and Economic Society* at least—I believe he allowed himself to fall into this attractive trap by setting such an impossibly high standard of completeness that he could not, or would not, finish it himself. The posthumously published chapters do not portray Viner at his incisive best; the strenuous vacation had taken command of the vocation. But it is a heartening tribute to a credo to find someone living by it to the end.

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Rest Home

PAUL PETRIE

On a closed-in porch
divided in sunlit squares
(more oblong shaped than square)
she sits, straight up, not rocking,
wrapped in her shawl,
her feet together planted on the floor,

watching the birds
pursue their noisy purpose in the trees,
silhouettes of cars,
blue, green, and flashing upon the far-off road.

It is after breakfast. The sun is clear and cool.
The air is still.
She sits, not rocking,
lost in no reverie
of any past or future time
not here,
too purely what she is
for loneliness, too wise
for dreams,
and practicing
the art of casting shadows in the sun.

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REAPPRAISAL

Charles Doughty—Man and Book

RUTH GAY

Charles Doughty spent two years traveling in the deserts of Arabia in the 1870s and another three years in Italy writing his extraordinary book, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. Apart from these five years, the other seventy-eight of his life were quite unremarkable. Yet his experiences *were* remarkable, and his survival not just the result of good fortune, but the product of a tenacious, brilliant strategy that preserved him from murderous tribesmen and finally enabled him to contrive his escape from Arabia.

Travels in Arabia Deserta has enjoyed two cycles of popularity in its near century of existence; for the rest it has languished in a kind of revered obscurity. Yet both the man and the book claim our attention—the man as a type and the book as a unique specimen of English letters. Many Europeans in the nineteenth century were attracted to the intemperate Middle East and Africa. Those with the longest histories were the traders and the missionaries. Then there were the governors and military men, the geographers, naturalists, paleographers, and finally the invalids, dispatched by their doctors from the damp of northern Europe for the sake of their lungs. Even the simple adventurers were assiduous collectors of information, and almost all have left us voluminous memoirs, reports, and scientific studies. Only Doughty produced an authentic literary masterpiece.

Doughty in his travels, as in so much else, was different from other travelers. Where they were purposeful, he was accidental. Where they were factual, he was poetic. And yet not entirely so—a contradiction that is part of his interest for us. He was enough of a Victorian to be hardheaded in the East, however otherworldly he seemed in Europe. And like other Victorians he wrote a book on his travels. It is substantial in size: 1,300 pages long, divided into two volumes. Accompanying the text are a handsome map and hundreds of little sketches of monuments, landscapes, geological formations, animals, and scenes of Arab life. Like other travel books, it jogs along with the writer for the twenty-one months he is in Arabia. Yet despite these superficial similarities to the genre, the very first sentence shows us that Doughty's is no ordinary journal. Like the overture to a complex musical work, it sounds the many themes that will be taken up again and again in *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. Quite self-consciously Doughty has placed it almost as an epigraph to his work, setting it apart from the rest of the text by three stars. And so it begins, suggestive and resonant:

> A new voice hailed me of an old friend when, first returned from the Peninsula, I paced again in that long street of Damascus which is called Straight; and suddenly taking me wondering by the hand "Tell me (said he), since thou art here again in the peace and assurance of Ullah, and whilst we walk, as in the former years, toward the new blossoming orchards, full of the sweet spring as the Garden of God, what moved thee, or how couldst thou take such journeys into the fanatic Arabia?

Notwithstanding its hypnotic opening and its undoubted powers, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* is a book with many difficulties. Its length tries the reader's patience. Its style is archaic and obscure. Its vocabulary, where not Chaucerian, is Arabic, and both are embedded in an idiosyncratic sentence structure. Its narrative line is as accidental as life. There is no compelling climax; there are no revelations, no discoveries, no triumphs. The book simply ends when the journey is over.

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To begin with, the narrator himself is represented only scantily. It is not until nearly one-third of the way through the book, in fact, that he emerges as more than the seeing eye, to tell us for the first time how ill he bears the hardship of travel.

Characteristically, Doughty's entrance is woven so tightly into the narrative that it is almost lost. For nearly four hundred pages we have been reading a straightforward, but not highly dramatic, account of his observations and experiences. Travelers' mishaps, the notations of the naturalist, reports on Arab customs have all rhythmically succeeded one another, like the slowly passing desert landscape. The episode in which we are suddenly forced to recognize him begins like any other, with Doughty commenting on the usages of the Arabs. He has just joined a convoy of riders who are overtaking their tribe. As the day's march begins, Doughty notes how the chief leaps into the saddle: "He rode with headstall and bridle, the bit is unknown in these deserts." And then without a change of beat he writes:

> One hundred and fifty more miles of march were before me, almost without rest in the deadly heat, and the languishing life was already almost at my lips. From time to time I could hardly maintain myself in the saddle. Departing from Medain, I had taken no water and had not an ounce of food with me. The breathless sultry day was again upon us. . . . With the skin of the hands, neck and face, and of the shins and feet, broken and peeled, I rode in a sort of trance, and half burned. . . .

When he is finally offered a drink of water, he finds that with "the throat's dryness in the withering heat I could not swallow a draught." Yet, as they come to the end of the march, it is the geological observer, and not the suffering man, who speaks first:

> It was late in the day when we approached the Harra. . . . The bottom is overspread with an outborne drift of lighter pumice, mingled with an infinite cumber of broken up lava and some basaltic blocks. We ascended further by a steep place of sand-drifts, in the undercliffs of the mountain (always sandstone). . . .

But this catalog of the book's difficulties caricatures both the faults and the merits implied in them. For these faults are also the unique characteristics of the writer. Doughty has chosen devices, and even a language, entirely of his own contriving with which to reconstruct a time and a series of events. He is not particularly discursive, but he is deliberate. He does not choose to telescope time so that the dramatic highlights shine more brilliantly. Neither is his book a faithful day-by-day record; rather he maintains a certain proportion between the long, monotonous stretches of time spent moving through the desert from one pasture ground to another, and the climactic episodes of danger, violence, and narrow escapes from death.

What emerges finally, and remains to haunt the memory, are not even the Arabs but Doughty himself—silent (despite his 1,300 pages!), passive, and yet with a reserve of hidden strength: a blind toughness and determination of which even he is unaware. The journey begins in 1876 in Damascus when Doughty is thirty-three years old. His life, even by then, had been full of wanderings and obscure purposes. In this he was like many other well-born Englishmen of the time who found it natural to work and explore in dangerous and uncomfortable corners of the world.

Doughty's family on his father's side had held land in Suffolk from 1699, and on his mother's side was of East Yorkshire nobility; she was the granddaughter of the second Baron Hotham. Charles, her second son, was born in 1843 and was six-months old when she died. His father survived only another five and a half years, leaving him and his elder brother in the care of an uncle on his father's side.

Despite his orphaned condition, Charles's family feelings were strong, and the naval tradition of his mother's family fostered an early ambition to enter the navy. When he was thirteen, he failed to pass the physical examination required for entrance into naval training. This disappointment remained with him for the rest of his life and, by his own testimony, sharpened his patriotism. He was sent with a private tutor to study in France, and in 1861 entered Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where his father and grandfather had studied. There he read geology, an interest which had begun when he was a boy and had gone on long country walks with his uncle. As a student, his interests just barely coincided with the academic requirements of

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the university. While he was by no means rebellious, he was quite detached. He did not like to attend lectures. He had only a few friends, whom he took along on his exploratory tours, and he could not work on anything that did not arise first from within himself. He cared about natural science and philosophy, and, as a fellow student reported, "Doughty did not partake in such things as rowing."

In his characteristically solitary way, he formed a plan to explore the glaciers of Norway, and left Cambridge at the end of 1863 to spend nine months investigating them with the support of the Royal Geographic Society. He promptly cast his notes into a scientific report, which was published by the British Association in 1866. This was Doughty's first published work.

During his college years the family fortune had been declining, so that by the time he left Cambridge his income could support only a most abstemious existence. Yet after a naval career was closed to him, he does not seem to have contemplated any other. He accepted his poverty as he was later to accept the hardships of the desert—with tranquillity and passivity. His inclinations were those of a thinking man, not a worldly man. Having once had a reasonable income, he had not troubled himself to think about money. That his income was now reduced did not change his situation except in degree, and since he was a man with few desires, his life was hardly affected at all. Like many others of his generation and class, he was a private scholar, pursuing his interests with an intense, single-minded absorption.

By the end of Doughty's Cambridge career, geology was giving way to the second great interest of his life—the English language. To this study he brought the moral fervor that his contemporaries lavished on geology. His convictions led him to erect a simple pantheon occupied by two gods: Chaucer and Spenser. To these he not only ascribed the merits due their excellence as poets, but saw them also as the guardians of some primeval stage of national purity.

Doughty's attachment to Chaucer and the consequences he drew from it were expressed in a few simple principles that remained unchanged and unmodulated throughout his life. Bare though they may seem to us, to him they were entirely self-explanatory. "Patriotism and Religion!" he exclaims in his book. "In the one and the other there seem to us to be sweetly comprehended all virtues. . . . " In the simplicity of his heart, it seemed enough for Doughty to write Patriotism with a capital letter. To his contemporaries, too, the word evoked noble sentiments. Doughty's patriotism, however, was more than an abstract emotion. It supplied him with a significant part of his identity, for he was never more English than in the desert. Carrying it like a talisman over his heart, he was never lost, always sure, easy, and self-sufficient.

The ten years of his life after he left Cambridge bear out the single-mindedness of his purposes. For two years (1868–70) he studied the sources of the English language at the Bodleian in Oxford. Then, seeking continental origins, he traveled in 1870 and 1871 to Holland, Denmark, and Belgium, and from there moved steadily southward to France, Italy, Spain, and finally Greece. In this itinerary he was following a path that had been beaten through Europe for more than a century by his fellow Englishmen; but even in his travels to conventional sites, Doughty had his own idiosyncratic style. Although he stayed in places visited for their famous ruins by more properly directed young men, his scanty notebooks of the period show little interest in these monuments. Instead he seems to have been occupied with the books and studies he had begun earlier and carried with him. From Greece he moved by stages down the Levantine coast until he reached Acre. Once in the Holy Land, he proceeded on foot to visit the biblical landmarks and eventually, by a circuitous route, went on to Egypt at the end of 1874. Here, with a revival of his old geological interests, he decided to set out on an expedition to the Sinai peninsula. Traveling by mule in the company of some Arab servants, he set as his goal the recently rediscovered Arabia Petraea, or Stony Arabia.

This corner of the great Arabian peninsula, whose name was taken from an ancient Ptolemaic map, had lain unseen by European eyes for over a thousand years. Originally it was the home of an indigenous people, the Nabateans, and had been a crossroads of trade between Arabia and Egypt. Since its rediscovery, it had become famous for the remarkable houses and public buildings built into the red

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rock walls of the valley between the first and fourth centuries A.D. There were celebrated temples, a treasure house, a theater, and grottoes, all decorated with classical facades. At the end of its prosperity in the fourth century, its only inhabitants were some remnants of the original Nabateans and nomadic Arab tribes from the south who camped in the stone grottoes during the cold winter months. After the seventh century, Petra and its monuments lay unknown in their rock cup except for surviving references in Latin authors.

It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that it was rediscovered, by the great Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. His reports, published posthumously in 1822, soon encouraged the more intrepid European travelers, so that when Doughty appeared on the scene, fifty years later, there were already standard lists of the major sites to be visited and warnings against the chicanery of the native guides.

At this time Doughty knew only a little Arabic, but enough to engage in some conversation with the natives of the region. Here he learned of the carvings at Medain Salih, a stopping place on the Pilgrimage road to Mecca. In the coffeehouses near Petra they were praised as more wonderful than those he had just seen, and from these conversations grew Doughty's next plan: to go down to Medain Salih and take impressions of the inscriptions there. No European had yet done this, although the inscriptions had been reported in Europe.

Arabia was a curiously inaccessible subcontinent to Europeans. Unlike Africa, much was known about Arabia in Europe. But the reports were hardly more recent than biblical references, the accounts of Herodotus, Strabo, Eusebius, and Ptolemy. Moreover, Europeans regarded the works of Arab writers of more recent date as of doubtful reliability. Yet in the great trade centers of the Near East, they could meet the many varieties of peoples who inhabited the peninsula, and could hear reports of the interior. Medain Salih was only one of many fabled sites which seemed to exist to tantalize Europeans.

Travel in general was unsafe, particularly for a Christian whose death could be interpreted as the religious duty of every Moslem. To be found in the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, meant a violent end for any Christian who had defiled these sites with his presence. The handful of Christians who did manage to explore some parts of Arabia either went in disguise or provided themselves with a substantial escort—and even so, some were killed on the way. In view of these difficulties, Medain Salih, which lay on a well-traveled road and was under Turkish rule, was a particularly attractive site. The Pilgrimage caravan from Damascus to Mecca stopped at Medain Salih—where there was a government-maintained well—both going and returning. Since Medain Salih did not lie within the Holy Precincts, Doughty thought it should be possible for a confessed Christian to go there without subterfuge and yet under the protection of a caravan.

Since Doughty's income was too small to support even such a modest expedition, he needed to look about for money and, what was even more important, official protection. From Petra he wrote to the Royal Geographic Society in London to ask for financial support. He next proceeded to Damascus to procure official letters of safe conduct. But neither the English consul nor the governor of Transjordan, Mohammed Said Pasha, who was also the leader of the Pilgrimage caravan, would take any responsibility for such a venture. Mohammed Pasha added to his refusal chilling tales of the murder of European travelers who persisted in going to isolated parts of Arabia. Doughty, however, was not dissuaded, and was for the moment rather more troubled by the lack of an answer from the Royal Geographic Society than by the lack of official interest in his project. Afraid that the mails out of Damascus were too slow, and yet unwilling to travel all the way back to England to apply to the Society, he decided to go a little way into Europe. In August 1875 he set out for Vienna and, arriving the following month, wrote a second letter to the Society, asking for £100 and also for help in securing a *firman*, or official order from the sultan himself, guaranteeing his safety on the journey. He thus traveled fifteen hundred miles to mail a letter, an act somehow typical of Doughty.

In November, the Society considered his application and rejected it for perfectly straightforward reasons: "The country which Mr. Doughty proposes to examine," the minutes record, "will be regularly surveyed by

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the English and American Exploration Funds during the course of the next two years. As regards the Geology of the Dead Sea and Arabah, it has already been examined by G. Larteb who has published some account of it, and his complete work is now being struck off in Paris." The place of the amateur explorer was rapidly disappearing, although Doughty did not yet realize it, and his difficulty in getting a grant to help in his travels only foreshadowed his own even more serious troubles in publishing the results of his work later.

Without the aid of money or official permission, Doughty nonetheless persisted in his plan to visit Medain Salih. The next Pilgrimage caravan would leave Damascus for Mecca in November 1876. This gave Doughty almost a year to prepare for his journey, which to him meant study and physical training. In order to improve his Arabic he returned to Damascus and found a place to live in the home of a Lebanese Christian. In his orderly way, he arranged for lessons from an Arab Christian whom he visited regularly for an hour every day precisely at noon. When he arrived, he placed a watch open on the table before them, and worked steadily through the hour, inquiring about derivations and original meanings of the words he was learning. Even in a foreign tongue, Doughty's antiquarianism prevailed over a desire for mastery of the colloquial language. In a world prodigal in its waste of time, Doughty's careful and precise use of it was part of his Englishness abroad. For eight months he maintained an unbroken regimen of close and constant study, and matured his plans for his visit to Arabia.

The fleeting image that we catch of Doughty as the methodical Englishman in the lethargic East changes rapidly when he actually begins to live among the Arabs and accepts without comment their tempo and style of life—spending, like them, whole days dozing under an awning or gossiping over coffee. The knowledge that he would do this must have been somewhere in his mind, for he did not attempt to pack hampers of supplies, as the contemporary guidebooks urged. On the contrary, he spent three months during the summer in a mountain village in Lebanon, living on scanty Arab fare and systematically accustoming himself to irregular hours of sleep.

Shortly before the Pilgrimage (or Haj) caravan was about to depart, he returned to Damascus to make a final attempt to get protection on his journey. But neither Moslem nor Englishman would help him, and since the caravan was already forming to move out of the city gates, Doughty had the alternative of staying behind and giving up his plan, or of riding out incognito, either alone or as part of some private group. While he hesitated, the caravan departed. Remaining behind were only a few scattered latecomers who were hastily gathering their supplies together and preparing to follow. With one of these parties, a group of Persian Moslems, Doughty was finally enrolled by his friends. His identity as a Christian was known to the leader of the group, who accepted £10 to permit Doughty to join him. On November 10, 1876, Doughty left Damascus riding on a mule to begin his journey in Arabia with two forced marches—carrying with him his scientific instruments, his books, and a variety of purposes.

Even this early, we see what will become Doughty's characteristic way of moving through Arabia—somewhat crabwise. In the forefront of his mind there is always a clear, seemingly rational objective. The danger involved is always discountable on idealistic grounds: science will be advanced. But underneath, just barely acknowledged, or rather waiting to be acknowledged at the plausible moment, he carries with him a thousand harebrained schemes, a desire to see what had not been seen before: natural phenomena, lost cities, unknown peoples. Over and over again, when he can leave some potentially dangerous situation, he hesitates because if he stays he may see some place, some thing as yet known only by report. But once the fabled city of Kheybar, or Tayif, or Boreyda appears under his feet, the dreamer vanishes. In a real city his behavior is practical, not fanciful. Then immediately the man of science appears. The population is numbered; the crafts are surveyed; the agriculture is appraised; the prosperity is measured; readings are taken of the temperature and rainfall; notations made on the altitude.

The narrative of the journey that began with Doughty's stealthy departure from Damascus is the thread of *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. It is a thread, however, that is often

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lost in the surrounding richness of textures. Doughty's account of his refusal by the authorities and his hurried departure with the Persians is given a brief notice, and in his book he then settles down to a thorough report of his twenty-odd days with the Haj caravan. As he neglects to tell us, few Christians survived such an excursion.

Doughty arrived at Medain Salih on December 4, 1876, having occupied his time on the road with close observations of the pilgrims and with scientific notations on the passing landscape. He was accepted by the tower keeper as a guest in that fortress and worked steadily for two months taking impressions of the inscriptions and carvings of the famous "rock cities." When the caravan returned from Mecca on February 12, 1877, Doughty had finished his work. His two hundred impressions on heavy blotting paper were wrapped carefully in oilcloth and consigned to the British consulate in Damascus. Having made his offering to science, he was ready to travel, although he had in his head only a few fixed points that he hoped to reach as occasion offered. In each district, Doughty planned to have himself conveyed in the care of an Arab chief, who would in turn hand him over to an ally; thus, as far as was possible in the wild and unseen deserts, there would always be those who would be answerable for his life. Although he did not disguise being a Christian, his one dissimulation was to travel as a hakim, or learned medical man, and he carried with him a vaccine for smallpox and a chest of medicines. By selling his drugs he hoped to earn his keep in Arabia, and also provide himself with a covering identity and purpose.

The first of his hosts was Zeyd, a chief of the Fukara, whom Doughty met at Medain Salih. Doughty's place as a considerable person in the eyes of Zeyd was assured when the Pasha of the Pilgrimage caravan recognized him in this unexpected place. Although the Pasha had refused him at Damascus, he showed himself ready to protect Doughty at Medain Salih. Doughty describes how the caravan is already passing out of sight of the fortress as he rides with Zeyd to overtake him.

> Looking aside under the sun, he saw and knew me; and immediately with good humour he said to my Beduin companion,—"I commit him to thee, and (laying the right hand over his heart,) have thou a care of him as of mine own eye." . . . I delayed yet, I spoke to the Pasha of the sick camel which Zeyd had bought for me: so he said to Zeyd, "Hearken! thou shalt restore the camel to his owner, and require the money again;—and (he said to me) if this Beduwy do not so I myself will require it of him at Damascus."

On this slender guarantee Doughty hoped to start the chain that would ensure his safety for the rest of his travels.

For the next three months Doughty lived in a kind of halcyon tranquillity with the Fukara Arabs, accompanying them on the circuit of their grazing grounds and visiting the oasis of Teyma. He was then ready, he said, to leave Arabia, and returned to the fortress at Medain Salih hoping to pick up a convoy that would take him the 150 miles to the port of Wejh on the Red Sea. A group of riders bound for Wejh stopped at Medain Salih and told him that he might join their butter caravan, which was now camped at some distance from Medain Salih but would be leaving there in a few days. Two days of hard riding in burning heat brought him to the camp, but he thought a journey of more than a hundred miles across the steaming plains to reach the coast was more than he could survive. Reluctantly the sheikh permitted him to stay behind with the women in the relative coolness of the plateau. Then with some shuffling from hand to hand, Doughty began his second long stay with a tribe, this time the Moahib.

In this period, during which Doughty has not quite recovered from the severe consequences of his two days of forced riding, he tells of constantly making the small choices which seem plausible to a sick man, but which have tremendous consequences. When he has a second opportunity to go to Wejh with a convoy, once again his weakness prevails over the good judgment that might have urged the four-day journey to the coast. But he cannot inflict that hardship on himself, and instead remains behind in an almost trancelike condition, lulled by the slow rhythm of Arab life. One understands his reason for not going; yet it is not quite persuasive. Somewhere we feel that Doughty was not really ready to leave Arabia after a pastoral tour of only a few months. The difficulties of illness and the unavailability of an

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escort actually help him to realize his half-conceived, half-recognized desire to explore further.

When the possibility of departure has passed, his energy returns. He begins to work on a new scheme—to visit Kheybar, a city in the heart of the peninsula known as an ancient citadel of the Jews. His desire to reach Kheybar being firmer than his desire to reach Wejh, he begins to cast about for an escort. Hearing of a man about to depart for Kheybar from a nearby market town, he rides to meet him. But he and his guide arrive a day too late, and this, Doughty says, prolonged his stay in Arabia for another year. His welcome with the Moahib being worn thin, Doughty decided to go to Teyma, a populous oasis, hoping from there to find some passage to Kheybar. But his itinerary in Arabia was, as we know, not always direct, often made up haphazardly as circumstances dictated.

After six weeks at Teyma, in October 1877, Doughty joined a group of riders who were setting out to Hayil. Hayil was the principal city of northern Arabia, the seat of a powerful prince, Ibn Rashid, and its fine horses were almost legendary in Europe. From such a center of trade, he thought, he must surely find an escort to Kheybar. But as a poor Christian he received a mixed and, on the whole, not very friendly reception. Indeed, he *was* sent to Kheybar from Hayil, but rather unceremoniously. He left one evening after a month's residence, and was not at all sure that his escort would not murder him on the way.

At Kheybar, Doughty lived in semi-imprisonment until the governor finally consented to his departure. But the way out of Kheybar, and out of Arabia, led him once again through unfriendly Hayil. Ibn Rashid and the principal sheikhs, among whom Doughty counted some defenders, were gone when Doughty returned. Thus vulnerable, he was roughly handled by the populace. With difficulty, he made a lesser official give him a safe-conduct, and escaped. His protector-companions left him at an encampment one hundred miles west of Hayil. But Ibn Rashid's power extended far out into the desert; and so Doughty was handed from tribe to tribe and finally sent off with a butter caravan that was to take him to Jidda. A port on the Red Sea, this city would be particularly welcome to Doughty because an English consul was in residence there.

But his companions proved suspicious and hostile. At the turning-off point, Ayn-ez-Zeyma, when all the rest were to proceed to Mecca and only he and his guide were to turn west and go to Jidda, he was attacked by the fanatical pilgrims at the way station. Abandoned by his guardian, he was robbed of everything and taken to the Grand Sherif at Tayif. This deputy of the Turkish government received him with cordiality and hospitality beyond all his expectations and even gave him sumptuous new robes and a headdress in which to leave Arabia. These were so grand that some years later, in England, he had himself painted in them.

The Sherif arranged to send Doughty to his own people in Jidda under a large convoy that left Tayif on July 29, 1878. The hundred miles were covered in five easy stages to spare Doughty's health, which had now grown very feeble, and he was set down in Jidda on August 2. Here he wound up his Arabian affairs: seeing the English consul, gathering up notebooks that had been forwarded there, getting medical attention, and finally taking passage on a ship bound for India.

Travels in Arabia Deserta ends with Doughty's arrival at Jidda, and this bare outline of his adventures shows them to be no different in kind from those of his fellow explorers of the period. They all suffered physical hardship. They all had narrow escapes; some, indeed, did not make that last escape. And they all added a little piece to the growing supply of information about Arabia.

To record Doughty's itinerary through Arabia is, however, about as illuminating as listing Odysseus's ports of call. These details sometimes seem barely relevant to the significance of the book. To the anthropologist, it may be interesting to know the circuit of the Bedouin Harb, their allies, their weaponry, and whether they owned mares as well as camels. But to other readers, the Harb, like the Princess Nausicaa, exist in a timeless present. And the facts of their existence, like the listing of the Princess's laundry, only embroider an essentially fantastic situation. Doughty—by his style, by the way he often speaks of himself in the third person—conveys the sense of the remote plane on which

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he lived in Arabia. However much he may have wished it, his return to reality was not easy.

When Doughty arrived in Bombay in 1878, after his twenty-one months in Arabia, he was thirty-five years old and a physical wreck. In this state, so common among his Victorian contemporaries, he lived on for almost another fifty years, immensely productive and active. When he sailed from Jidda he was too sick to make the entire trip to India without medical attention, and stopped for rest and treatment at the English station in Aden. Even this did not restore his strength, and when he arrived at Bombay he was so weak that he simply lay down in the station waiting room until a compassionate stranger took him home. When he finally appeared at the European Hospital to beg admittance, he was refused at first because his skin was so blackened and toughened by exposure that he no longer looked like an Englishman. The hospital, as it turned out, had little to offer him except rest, which he needed. It could not treat an infection brought on by the microorganisms in the water he had drunk in Arabia. With typical detachment he was fascinated by his view of the bilharziasis under the microscope.

The inconvenience of ill health, however, could not distract Doughty from his scientific responsibilities. Having collected geological and geographical information in Arabia, he now wanted an audience for it. From his hospital bed he wrote to the Bombay Asiatic Society offering to describe his discoveries, and ended with a rare appeal for human sympathy, couched in his very special language: "But I will look from you on your part for some little kindness to me also a stranger. If you are scientific men will you let me languish here?" This was answered with the indifference that was later to greet his overtures in the various learned capitals of Europe. A more specific plea, a request for the loan of some books, particularly a copy of Chaucer, as well as an advance of money against a bank draft, was also refused.

His return to England was speeded by one of the remarkable coincidences that was made possible in Victorian England by large families with far-flung interests. A cousin, who was captain of an Indian troopship bound for England, happened to be in Bombay when Doughty was in the hospital. Doughty, learning of this, presented himself to his cousin, who promptly invited him to sail home as his guest. This was welcome protection after many years of wandering.

Doughty came back to England reduced from a part-time saint to an eccentric. To the Arabs, with a few exceptions, his very existence among them was an offense against their religion. To those exceptions—and it was to them that he owed his life—he appeared noble, judicious, wise. In the precarious atmosphere of fanaticism restrained by temperate authority, he made his way for two years. Every day's survival in Arabia was a testimonial to his tact, to his superb coolness, to his self-possession, and above all to his immense determination. But in England, when he landed in December 1878, he was a sick man, and everything he said and did was strange.

On the voyage home he seemed bewildered by large numbers of people together, and found that he could not eat European food. The meat, he said, burned his mouth. Some years later he wrote with a kind of homesickness about an Arab dish of rice and clarified butter which was more delicious to his taste than anything he was ever to eat again.

His return to England, and to being an Englishman at home, was accomplished in stages. Although he was never a man of easy sociability, in his first months back he seemed to find it hard even to speak. He had become, in this respect, like the Bedouins. In writing about them on their dry marches, he often described how their very voices seemed parched and came rolling harshly out of their throats. His last companions in Arabia, on the final stage of his journey to Jidda, chaffed with him about how he would speak to his own people, and mimicked the ceremonious conversation of the town: ". . . and they said to me, with the Arabian urbanity, 'When we arrive, thus and thus shalt thou speak (like a Beduwy—with deep-drawn voice out of a dry windpipe). . . . The Lord strengthen thee, O Governor! what be the camels worth here?—the price of small cattle? and how much is *samn* [clarified butter]?' " Rather involuntarily, one would guess, he followed this advice. The same force of habit, or a kind of inertness induced by his travels, made him

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continue to wear Arab clothing for a while after his return. His bare feet in open sandals, his silken sash, and his large green umbrella in mid-December created a sensation in the quiet English countryside to which he returned.

India was the farthest point that he reached on his travels away from home, and it was also the figurative as well as the literal turning point in his life. When he came back to England, he had put his student wandering years behind him. Since 1865 he had been traveling across Europe and had, it seemed, almost stumbled into Arabia. His record of his years in Arabia gives off something of this trancelike quality. Even the recording of his own sufferings seems to be made from a hazy distance.

But by the time Doughty returned to England, Arabia had become his center. For the next half century he lived as a penurious and quiet literary gentleman in a house in Sussex, pursuing his self-set task of casting the history of Britain into heroic verse. Into this lifelong labor his Arabian experience entered as an ever-present ground tone. A lover of the ancient and hierarchic, cherishing antiquity for its own sake, Doughty had found in the slow and traditional life of the Bedouins the hieratic style of his imagined ancient Britons. His patriotic theme, however, did not arouse the enthusiasm he hoped for, and his style was, in any case, caviar to the general.

His very devoted friends saw to the publication of his works and to assuring Doughty a rightful place in the pantheon of English writers. It has become, unfortunately, a neglected place. Despite their efforts, he remains largely unknown, which is a pity. There are few books in the English language which, like *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, can enmesh the reader so entirely into the remote and dreamlike fabric of an Arabian journey. All clocks stop; history disappears; there is only the seamless present of the sun, the tribe, and the voice of the narrator in our ear.

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Le Faux Chic

JACQUES BARZUN

A recent news story about a French dictionary of anglicisms, or more popularly of "Franglais," describes no doubt accurately the contents of the work and the views of its compilers. But it unwittingly gives a very misleading idea of what has happened and is happening to French, and in lesser measure to other Western languages, including English.

I am not here concerned to give a name to the large-scale importation of Anglo-American vocables into French. Depending on one's feeling for words or vested interest in their use, one will find it acceptable, absurd, enriching, detestable, amusing, or immoral. But one thing it is not, and that is normal.

Languages, as everybody knows, have borrowed and exchanged words from time immemorial. But the examples and arguments given to suggest that Franglais is but a continuation of the happy practice err in both substance and judgment.

It is pointed out, for instance, that in the twelfth century the land-bound French took from the seafaring English the word *boat* and made it into *bateau.* So why be hidebound now and refuse *blue jeans?* The example is a gross misrepresentation. We are invited to imagine that until the 1100s the French had listened to their mothers and not been near the water. The fact is that in the twelfth century the word *boat* did not exist in English but was current in both English and French in the form *bat.* It was a Germanic root and also a Celtic one (Kymri: *bâd*), and it spread from Scandinavia to what is now Spain and Portugal.

Nor is this the whole story. The Old French of the twelfth century was not a language in the modern sense but a collection of dialects spoken in northern France, where Germanic tribes—notably the Franks and Normans—had settled. Their original speech had mingled with unstandardized, not-much-written forms of low Latin and Celtic patois. Along the facing coasts of England and France the language of the sea particularly would thrive on kindred roots.

The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 gave fresh occasions for crossing the channel and mixing vocabularies, and it was only after centuries—and the printing press—that something like two fairly unified national languages emerged, still very much mixed. As late as five hundred years after the Conquest, in the essays of Montaigne, the reader is struck by the dozens of words that sound deceptively "English"—*bargain*, for instance, or *suburb(e).*

These were good French and are no longer, because in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries French underwent a purge to rid itself of words thought barbaric or foreign or pedantic or vulgar. With the purge went the habit of turning all borrowings into French-looking words. Thus *riding-coat* became *redingote* and *bollwerk* became *boulevard.* (Incidentally, the *coat* in the former was a reborrowing, since *cotte* is Old French and modern too.)

Now compare this long evolution with what goes on among languages nowadays: in the formative span, a set of common roots and of cross-borrowings, followed by a gradual sifting, and finally standardization through printing. Borrowing and sifting were done semi-

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consciously, through speech and for use, by unassuming sailors, fishermen, merchants, soldiers, wandering students, and clerics. It was functional not bookish.

In our latter day, we find not bookishness but something close to it: the conscious, contrived prose of journalists and advertisers striving for novelty. Their effort is seconded by widespread literacy, which encourages every citizen to be clever and up to date in speech. Borrowings and inventions multiply not from practical need but from a low-grade kind of snobbery.

That is plainly seen in Franglais. Those who combat it do not object because it borrows needed words, but because it throws into an established vocabulary words which duplicate native ones (*living [room]* for *studio*); words which the native users cannot agree on how to pronounce (the French give *-ing* three different sounds); which are used or made up contrary to their original sense (*un footing* is a walk, *un smoking* is a dinner jacket); and which defy the common forms of handling: the gender, the plural, the combining, and often the spelling of Franglais words follow individual choice.

Whether taken as sad or funny, this state of affairs is a strictly modern achievement. It could not exist without our technology and our widespread semi-education. Uneducated people would shut their minds to such fancy tricks and continue to talk the vernacular. Better educated people would resist out of a sense of fitness, aesthetic or intellectual. Nor does eventual assimilation seem possible, for what the users of these real or pseudo English words enjoy is just this outlandishness and anarchy of usage, this relief from the commonplace.

And that is the point at which Franglais represents in extreme form what is happening to most other civilized languages of the West. Bored by the barrage of common words for common use, we continually mix and stir vocabulary and usage, not to communicate but to refresh and enliven—indeed, to awaken. We borrow from the gutter and from high pedantry, misusing if we can, just to be sure the term is unusual. We wear out fancy metaphors as fast as we can make them, we rename things hoping they will look different. Even acronyms may express our desire for more mystery in life—and if so they succeed.

One word from Franglais may be taken as a symbol of the whole performance: *tennisman*. It is not and never was an English word. (All the better, it's a creation!) What comes clear in it is *tennis*, which is what the English made, the old way, out of *tenez*, the warning word of the server in the old French game. *Tennis* then went back to France as is in the last century, and now *man* adds to it the charm of violating the normal nasalized pronounciation of *an*, besides going against the rule of not compounding ideas but articulating them—*joueur de tennis*. Now say the two terms over to yourself and decide: which would better soothe your suffering ego?

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Where There's No Will, There's a Way

BROM ANDERSON

MODERN FRENCH PHILOSOPHY. *By Vincent Descombes. Cambridge University Press. $32.50.*

Vincent Descombes's *Modern French Philosophy* is the first in a series of books, directed by the Oxford philosopher Alan Montefiore for the Cambridge University Press, whose purpose is to explain Continental philosophy to the English-speaking world. Descombes's book is an excellent guide to the last fifty years of French philosophy; it is also very funny. It is funny because it describes, in the simplest, most graphic terms, the psychological motivation of the five or six revolutions that have swept French philosophy in those fifty years. It describes them as expressions of the conflict between philosophical generations; it also describes them as results of emotional need. It is, of course, always amusing to connect the high universality of abstract speculation with inchoate psychological need; it is especially amusing here because of the air of boldly and effortlessly transcending all human limitation which has characterized French thought of the period. Descombes's history points to what we always half expected to run up against and half consciously looked for: the human, all-too-human basis of the high and rather abstractly gestural thought of France since the thirties. He thereby makes manifest the joke latent in the attempts of French thinkers to serve personal need by the elaboration of abstractions which claim to rise above the demands, manner, and vulnerability of the merely human and ordinary.

Of course it is quite clear that French philosophy since the thirties is a very personal matter, its meaning and power closely bound up with the particular persons who have propounded it and represented it in the public eye. It is Foucault who really fascinates us behind the intricate grillwork of his writings; it is Lacan whom the public cares about, has a transference on, wants to touch and capture a token of. All this in a philosophical world that proclaims the breakdown of the self and the end of man!

Descombes begins by evoking the trait of French philosophy which, he thinks, is most likely to strike and puzzle foreigners: its thoroughly political character (which it has, he says, despite the fact that the serious works of actual political philosophy in France can be counted on the fingers of one hand). He remarks on the circumstance, unheard of outside France, that every change in philosophical view is expected, as a matter of course, to imply a change in political line—every nuance of doctrine in epistemology or metaphysics is thought to correspond, in the most rigorous fashion, to a choice of political tactics or to a new editorial slant for one's magazine. This quality is, of course, related to the impersonal yet highly personal character of French philosophy: just as personalities affirm themselves through highly personal systems of metaphysics, so do narrow, transitory, and, from a philosophical point of view, highly contingent political positions justify themselves through, and are used to express, highly stylized and very abstract views about the nature of reality. The Frenchman seeks metaphysical necessity for his political choice or his personal will—he seeks to build himself into the structure of the cosmos.

It is possible to argue that the politicization of philosophy involves a denial of the existence of concrete fact, a refusal to believe

BROM ANDERSON, a doctoral candidate in philosophy at Columbia University, teaches humanities in the College.

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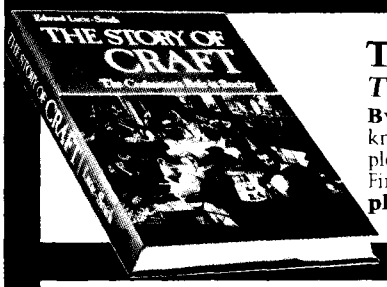

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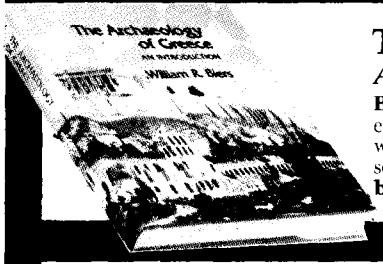

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that matter exists independently of ideology or of the will. For what is most striking about this French politicization of philosophy is its abstract character. The French intellectual sought concreteness, but since he sought concreteness *as such*, he ended up with something very abstract indeed—a general disposition to throw himself into some violent, total commitment, but a disposition indifferent, in the end, to what that commitment was. What really mattered, perhaps, was that the point of view be radical and total, that it surround everybody except its espouser and give him a monopoly on the correct perception of reality and political duty. This impulse to outflank produces a shifting of positions that bears a certain analogy to the movement of fashion (and it is, after all, as much a matter of style as of belief). If Stalinism has never really become unfashionable in Paris it is perhaps because of the kinship between the perverse, unquestioning, antirational quality of obedience to the party line and similar qualities involved in the movement of fashion.

The insistence on the political character of philosophy goes, in Paris, with two things. One is a contempt for mere moralism and the *moraliste:* this is Sartre's contempt for Camus (which succeeded in burying his thought in France for a very long time) and many people's contempt for the *nouveaux philosophes.* For morality condemns the self to its finite particularity; it posits a real, stubborn world which cannot be mastered through abstraction. The person who clings to morality in the face of the terrible ironies and necessities of world history short-circuits the vibration between the I and the Absolute. The true philosopher shares some of the moral tastes of the Hell's Angels. (The reverence for Sade, in Paris, is not to be dissociated from the unwillingness entirely to repudiate Stalin—or at least to do so on moral grounds. One is much more comfortable repudiating him as bourgeois or sexually repressed.)

The second concomitant of the politicization of philosophy is the total character of French thought, its impulse to challenge the whole set of assumptions by which the other (the object of one's intellectual aggression) lives. And, of course, the notion that philosophy always requires a total attack on the enemy's way of life and thought is not very different from the notion of politics which understands only terrorism—that is, thoroughly symbolic, but very violent action: action which has the form of pure moral gesture; gesture or discourse which has the character of the most extreme action and assertion of the will. There is, in both this sort of politics and this sort of philosophy, an unwillingness to recognize the differences between thought and action, wish and will, work and play, word and deed, man and God. Both terrorism and French intellectual life are highly magical forms of activity. And both tend to assimilate life, whether the life of the mind or of the will (which they confound), to theater. No doubt there is a closer connection than people have been ready to acknowledge between the street theater and politics of the gesture of the sixties and the terrorism of today. If France has avoided terrorism, this is in part, perhaps, because her intellectuals have found ways of satisfying the energies of May 1968 through a dramatized, stylized intellectual activity which mistakes itself for a political action.

If, as Descombes puts it, everyone thinks that the real point of a metaphysical doctrine is revealed when its author states his views on the next election or the attitude to adopt toward the Communist party, this tells us something about the structure of society. It suggests a view of abstract thought as, in the highest degree, an affair of the community—so much so that it can be the subject of gossip. But, of course, this implies a sort of collapse of the community, an anxious dependency of practical life and choices on the tyrannical deliverances of the metaphysician.

How is one to explain the extraordinary authority of the philosopher in France? As Descombes says, it can only be understood in relation to the French educational system. In France one studies philosophy in order to pass the *agrégation* or the *Capes*—standard (and very lengthy) examinations which entitle one to a job teaching the philosophy class in the lycées of the French state. The syllabus for the *agrégation* examination is essentially determined each year by one professor—the president of the *jury d'agrégation*—who is appointed directly by the Minister of Education. These standardized *agrégation* examinations select teachers who, in turn, prepare their students to answer the questions on the

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uniform baccalaureate examinations, based likewise on a uniform syllabus, "the same for all the French lycées of the planet Earth and, if need be, of the others," as Descombes puts it. This has been going on since 1793.

Clearly a culture that behaves in this way believes in the possibility—and the necessity—of validating itself abstractly. Clearly, too, it believes that the state can be made the agent of this validation. As Descombes says, these beliefs give the philosophical culture of France—not only in general but as embodied in the educational institutions of the state and even in the details of the curriculum—an extraordinary and self-evident political importance. What is curious, Descombes observes, is that, although each year's *agrégation* syllabus, for example, is the focus of truly political struggles, since it is correctly thought to have a real importance for the history of French politics, nobody really questions the necessity of having such a syllabus. Traditionalism in this respect is by no means a preserve of the Right or of the powers that be; under some circumstances it may be the part of teachers on the Left, many of whom (with Derrida as one of their leaders) have mounted an ambitious attack on the French government for trying to "liquidate the study of philosophy in France"—by which they mean that it has tried to reduce the number of obligatory hours of philosophy instruction in lycées!

Descombes's story, then, is necessarily a political one. But what characterizes the French philosophy of the last fifty years—since, according to Descombes's scheme, Alexandre Kojeve's lectures on Hegel in the 1930s—is that it is not a defense of the bourgeois order which gives the exams, as had been Emile Durkheim's positivism and Léon Brunschvicg's neo-Kantianism. It seeks, rather, to be the purest negation of that order.

For Kojeve and his auditors (who included Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Bataille, and André Breton), Descombes explains, Kojeve was the man who would outbid the rationalists at their own game and thereby make the straitjacket of bourgeois moralism fly apart at the seams. For Hegel, as read by Kojeve, teaches that the end of history and the advent of the fully rational human society will come about not through moral earnestness, not through reasonable and pacific negotiation, but through tyranny, terror, and violence. The establishment of the universal homogeneous state, which will put an end to the possibility of politics and historical change, will be accomplished by a tyrant using terror in the service of an idea: for Hegel, at the beginning of this process, Napoleon; for Kojeve, Stalin. Since the modern tyrant is acting politically in the service of an idea, there is, finally, nothing for which the philosopher can reproach him, for the philosopher himself is essentially engaged in the same process. He, too, has the goal of bringing about the end of history through his teaching, which is, ipso facto, as political as the actions of the tyrant. Thus Kojeve proclaims the tyrannical impulse of the philosopher and the total, terroristic quality of his teaching. The only difference between tyrant and philosopher is that the tyrant carries out in practice what the philosopher enacts on the level of theory; the content, the motive, and even the structure of their performances are the same, except that in a sense the philosopher is the master of the tyrant himself.

Kojeve's lectures argued the hollowness of the morality of conscience when confronted with the corrosive ironies of world history; this attack on morality was allied, according to the logic set out earlier in this review, with an assault on common sense, a demonstration of the general unreality and shakiness of given reality when confronted with the extremity of the spirit and the need of the will. Kojeve's influence can be seen, for example, in *Humanism and Terror,* Merleau-Ponty's book of 1947 justifying the Moscow trials, which is a sustained polemic against the morality of conscience.

Kojeve's influence is also reflected in the campaign against humanism that made such a stir in France after Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* of 1947 and again in the writings of the great figures of the 1960s: Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Althusser, Lacan. Each philosophical generation carried on Kojeve's assault on common sense, morality, and in general on the economy of the finite self; but each generation did so in a different way, radicalizing and reacting against the themes of its predecessors. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre attacked the finite self through their attack on inner sincerity, on morality, on the ordinary idea of

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objectivity; the generation of 1960 through the idea that languages and codes are the real, that the self is a mere bearer or intersection of these. The generation of 1968 (Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard), for its part, made war on that self through the glorification of play, of the arbitrary, of desire, and through the attack on the stability of language, sanity, communicative intention. All, however, were making related assaults on it. One notices, though, a sort of progressive dissolution of will in the philosophers themselves, perhaps connected with their success—with their dissolution of French bourgeois society, or at least of its soul. Nietzsche would have called it a process of decadence.

How is one to explain the movement in French philosophy from Brunschvicg's neo-Kantian idealism, which was a justification of French rationalism and republican ideals, to the subversive antinomianism of Kojeve and his successors? There is, I would argue, no paradox here. The rationalism of Descartes and Robespierre already contains the radical assault on the given that in Kojeve and Derrida has merely taken another shape.

Descombes, after his funny and rather vivid account of these developments, seeks to explain them in a way which seems to me suggestive but inadequate. He proposes that modern French philosophy ought to be understood as an attempt to deal with the problem of the relation between subjectivity and the outer world. The defect of Descombes's formulation, I think, is that it leaves out the distinctive element of the will. Without introducing the term *will* it is not possible to describe the cravings for authority, for omnipotence, for submission, and for freedom that have governed French philosophy since the war and earlier. Nor is it possible to account for the fascination with personal power that the French philosophical audience has manifested in its transactions with its gurus.

The avoidance of the will as a term of explanation is an elision of the political and ethical dimension and, at the same time, of the cultural and psychological dimension. The three chief faults of Descombes's history are related to this elision. The first is the way in which his narrative, lively and satirical at the outset, sheathes its claws as it approaches the present: The extraordinarily respectful treatment of Derrida and Michel Serres, for example, is in disappointingly undramatic accord with current intellectual fashion. Accompanying this politeness is a lack of reflection on the political motive and meaning of Derrida's and Serres's thought, and on the fashionableness of that thought—on its congruence with cultural need. The second fault is Descombes's failure to discuss the relation between modern French philosophy and surrealism. His omission of the surrealist connection conceals the dark and dirty roots of that philosophy and protects its pretensions to a magical transcendence of its human situation. The third fault is Descombes's fashionable dismissal of the "new philosophers," particularly Bernard-Henri Lévy, who have been almost the first important figures on the French Left since Camus to have a sense of the virtues of morality and who, as Descombes makes it his business to narrate, have been the first to criticize in any serious way the politico-philosophical development among the French intelligentsia. Camus himself is not even mentioned. In bypassing Camus and Lévy, Descombes finally avoids confronting the meaning of the phenomenon he has brought before us: the magical use of abstraction to fill the emptiness of the human world.

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Reviewed by G. W. BOWERSOCK

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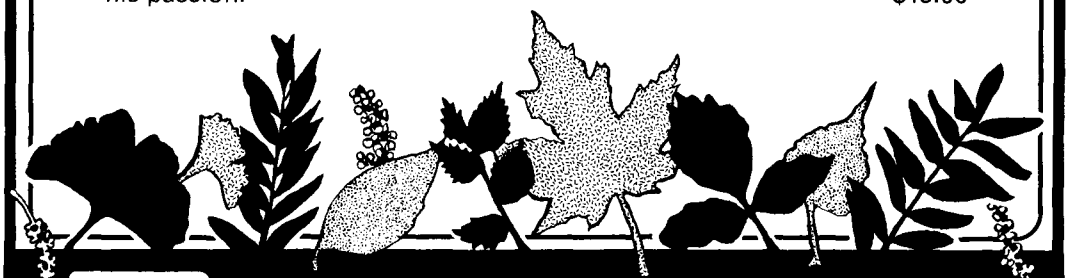

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development from the past. Political accommodation can, of course, be found anywhere. Tacitus thought that unbending allegiance to a lost cause did more harm than good inasmuch as the past could not be recovered while the present could only become more dangerous. It requires percipience of an exceptional kind to identify the point of no return and make the best of a bad situation.

Cassiodorus, coming from a moderately prominent family settled in Calabria, must have known perfectly well, as he reached maturity in the early sixth century A.D., that the Gothic dynasty installed at Ravenna was not likely to go away, at least not without a major military operation on the part of the court at Constantinople. And the court at Constantinople had problems of its own with the Persians on the eastern frontier. For a well-educated and ambitious young Italian who wished to turn his diplomatic skills to advantage, a career of accommodation with the Goths could not be avoided.

The obstacles were daunting. The Goths were not only outsiders, but heirs of a totally different cultural background with unpronounceable names like Amalasuintha and a religion which, though Christian, was heretical in the eyes of the orthodox believers of Italy. Yet Cassiodorus distinguished himself in their service at Ravenna. He was consul in 514 and nine years later held the post of *magister officiorum* in succession to the great Boethius, whose fall from favor and subsequent execution gave Cassiodorus his opportunity. It is unsettling to reflect that Boethius may actually have been a kinsman of Cassiodorus. It is even more unsettling to reflect that this indefatigable courtier in the Gothic court of Theodoric would move, once the Byzantine emperor finally turned his attention to the West, from Ravenna to Constantinople, and that he would ultimately end his days at an advanced age pondering orthography in an Italian monastery of his own foundation.

Cassiodorus was an impressive representative of his age. He was tough, energetic, and resilient, combining erudition with practicality. He devoted no less care to his sycophantic laudations of Gothic patrons than he did to his painstaking and sensitive elucidations of the Psalms. His Latinity was solidly rooted in the pagan classics, and his rhetorical powers were more than adequate to transform the Goths into patriotic defenders of Italy. Even as a man of God, Cassiodorus showed himself at home in the real world, for—as Benedict knew—monasteries do not come into being without organization. The sixth century was certainly a turbulent age, but no more so than many others. It may be doubted whether Cassiodorus viewed himself as living in a time of decline or collapse. He knew that there were large problems; but then he saw himself as contributing to their solution, first by politics and later by religion. He was scarcely the only person of his kind: In the following century Isidore of Seville worked for the glory of the Visigoths in Spain and won for them a legitimacy in Spanish history that has apparently lasted into modern times. At the end of the thirteenth century Rashid al-Din became the vizier of Ghazan Mahmud, the Mongol ruler of Persia, and wrote the history of the Ilkhanid dynasty for his Islamic subjects.

It is imperative, therefore, to look at Cassiodorus within the context of his own age and with some regard for the constraints of his position. O'Donnell's biography is wanting on both counts. He paints a very bleak picture of the sixth century, which he characterizes (rather too often) as an age of fragmentation. "The sixth century after the birth of Christ," says O'Donnell in his prologue, "must unquestionably but regrettably be assigned to the 'Dark Ages'. . . . The sixth century is poorly known to us chiefly because it was a fragmented age, following upon the most homogeneous centuries that ancient civilization ever knew." To begin a book about late antiquity with language like that is positively antediluvian. To claim that the centuries before the sixth were the most homogeneous that ancient civilization ever knew might conceivably be defensible if the sixth had been immediately preceded by the second. But how anyone could extol the homogeneity of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries defies imagination.

Part of the difficulty for O'Donnell is his own purple prose. Overstatement comes naturally to him, possibly as an unfortunate result of reading so much of Cassiodorus's Latin. In any case, the book is not helped by a description of Cassiodorus himself as "a little more than sinner, a little less than saint," or by an explanation of the failure to excavate San Martino in the following terms: "The

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tides of war washed away those plans." O'Donnell's most absurd metaphor has faint overtones of ecclesiastical impropriety: "The most extended apology for the work [the *Variae*] is the initial preface, where these motives must be pursued behind the billowing garments of Cassiodorian rhetoric." It is a pity that O'Donnell goes in for this kind of thing with such enthusiasm, because in its substance his book displays an enviable command of Cassiodorus's writings. If generalizations that require a larger context give him trouble, it must be said that detailed issues of chronology and interpretation show him at his best.

His approach to Cassiodorus is essentially through the works, which he deals with one by one. There is considerable summarizing, which is less tedious to read than the original but much less helpful in assessing O'Donnell's argument. His treatment reminds one of T. D. Barnes's book on Tertullian, but it lacks Barnes's vigorous style and brilliance of historical insight. The most original and satisfying parts of O'Donnell's arguments are those concerned with biblical exegesis. Here he quite rightly emphasizes the gulf between then and now in the way in which people think and feel. He is excellent on the gradual and unobtrusive transition in Cassiodorus's life from man of affairs to theologian. In proposing to examine the commentary on the Psalms, he observes, with perhaps only a little overstatement, "We are attempting to do things that the human race has forgotten how to do; we must attempt to teach ourselves to read all over again, to look to this bulky book to tell us things that we are unaccustomed to hearing in ways that we are not used to following." On all of this O'Donnell is right on target. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to find that he is utterly incapable of suspending his modern instincts in assessing Cassiodorus's secular writings.

If only O'Donnell had been able to follow his own admonition "to suspend every instinctive adverse judgment in order to pursue the unique form of human thought that lies behind the (to us) discordant surface features," his treatment of Cassiodorus's *Variae* would have been far more successful. As rhetoric, much in the *Variae* came directly from the Ciceronian tradition as mediated by the writers and theoreticians of the Roman Empire. It is unwise for O'Donnell to declare that there is triteness or triviality in the *Variae*, which he emphatically does, without trying to determine the taste of Cassiodorus's contemporaries. After all, in late antiquity the second-century rhetorician Fronto was judged to have been the equal of Cicero (*Romanae eloquentiae non secundum sed alterum decus*) and, in the absence of any text, scholars from the Renaissance onward were content to accept that opinion. When, however, extensive tracts of Fronto turned up in the nineteenth century, it became embarrassingly apparent that what late antiquity had found masterly looked to modern eyes trite and trivial, or rather—to use another phrase that O'Donnell applies to Cassiodorus's style—"dull and pedantic." It is too bad that we do not have in this book any real discussion of the literary milieu of the sixth-century Latin West and its indebtedness to the pagan classics.

Cassiodorus appears to have spent over a decade in Constantinople, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that he knew Greek fairly well by the end of his stay. In the monastic seclusion of Vivarium, Cassiodorus was concerned to encourage translations from Greek into Latin. In his commentary on the Psalms he had shown familiarity with Greek patristic authors whose works, as O'Donnell admits, "would not have been widely disseminated in the West at this time"—namely Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom. O'Donnell maintains, however, that Cassiodorus's works overall do not show a strong influence of Greek thought and therefore that he did not know Greek very well. A more ample analysis of his handling of Greek sources and a broader knowledge of patristic Greek than O'Donnell evidently possesses would be necessary to establish a point so obviously at variance with probability. (This is to say nothing of the fact that Cassiodorus came from southern Italy, in parts of which Greek was still spoken.) O'Donnell's meager citation of Greek material can be maddening, as on the two occasions when he refers to a Greek graffito on a sarcophagus without ever reporting in any language what that graffito says. Both of his footnotes identifying the publication of the graffito give the Greek title of the book in question entirely in capital letters. One begins to wonder whether O'Donnell

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has not ascribed to Cassiodorus a weakness in Greek that is more properly his own.

In much of the second chapter, and again in an appendix at the end, O'Donnell argues abortively against a view of Arnaldo Momigliano on Cassiodorus's lost history of the Goths. It would have been interesting to have that history to provide a clearer indication of Cassiodorus's integrity or lack of it. All that survives is an abridgment, made by a certain Jordanes after he had obtained a copy of the complete work from Cassiodorus's servant in Constantinople. In one of the oddest testimonies from the period, we learn that Jordanes had access to the full history for precisely three days. It is anyone's guess why it was lent for such a brief time and just what Jordanes could have done with it. The surviving abridgment carries the story down to 551; and accordingly it seems natural to suppose that Cassiodorus's history, as it was lent to Jordanes, also reached that date. But because a letter from the Gothic king Athalaric makes reference in 533 to a history by Cassiodorus of the royal house of the Amali, obviously there must have been a text in existence at that date. Momigliano argued plausibly that Cassiodorus subsequently extended his history to 551. Although O'Donnell repeatedly declares this to be an untenable position, his own is worse. He thinks the work was finished in 519 and that Jordanes was left without a prop for the last part of his summary. Yet, as O'Donnell himself observes, the sixty chapters of Jordanes can be neatly correlated with a fact which Cassiodorus reveals elsewhere: that his *Gothic History* was in twelve books, thus five chapters of Jordanes for each book. And precisely in Jordanes's last chapter there is an unmistakable verbal echo, noticed by O'Donnell, of Athalaric's tribute to Cassiodorus's history.

Since, despite the loss of the *Gothic History*, so much of Cassiodorus's work has survived, it comes as something of a surprise to see O'Donnell briskly deny that Cassiodorus had much influence at all in the Middle Ages. It is true that the monastic enterprise at Vivarium proved to have no future, but the work that was done there certainly did. Few readers are likely to be persuaded when O'Donnell says, "Cassiodorus's influence on medieval

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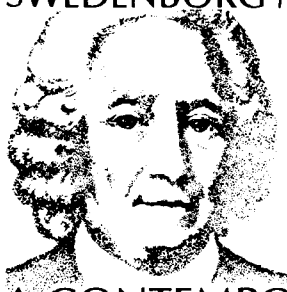

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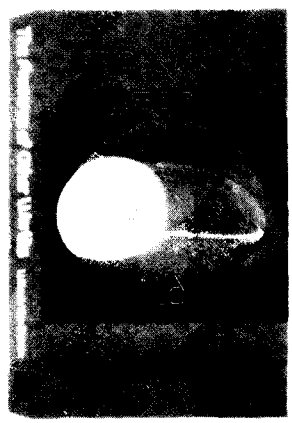

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culture was, to be blunt, insignificant." This looks like nothing so much as an overreaction. It is certain that this remarkable figure, a man of both East and West, who was both courtier and monk, rhetorician and theologian, has long been considered important. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* calls him "one of the founders of western medieval civilization." The time has perhaps come for a balanced reassessment, but that is something which O'Donnell's study, valuable as it is, fails to provide.

The Perfect Blendship

SEX AND SENSIBILITY: IDEAL AND EROTIC LOVE FROM MILTON TO MOZART. *By Jean H. Hagstrum. University of Chicago Press. $25.*

Reviewed by G. S. ROUSSEAU

Rather more is known about the sex than the sensibility of the eighteenth century. Anders Nygren, Denis de Rougemont, Irving Singer, David Foxon, and now Lawrence Stone and Reay Tannahill have explicated the high life and low tumble of sexuality in the period, and other students, especially historians of art, have illuminated its pornography. But its sensibility—or "sensibility"—remains a vast no-man's-land: large unexplored territory few dare to traverse unless sure of their footing.

Naturally there have been travelers to this unsettled country: Louis Bredvold wrote its "natural history" back in the 1960s, Robert Brissenden expounded its "virtues in distress" only a few years ago, and there have been a handful of doctoral theses. But these are isolated voyages, bravely undertaken but barely noticed, and they have faded from memory and imagination almost as soon as they have been reviewed. I suspect that the reason for this owes far more to the land of sensibility than to any aspect of the scholar's journey there. Difficult as it is to imagine, this is even true, though to a lesser extent, of Northrop Frye's little essay, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," which is never discussed anymore except by a handful of postgraduate students in two or three universities.

The discrepancy between sex and sensibility is hardly perplexing. Sex is something everyone understands and, even if its precise components and anthropological milieu have varied from age to age, few men have objected to the imposition of a universal norm, however anachronistic. But sensibility has an altogether different history. It is a modern development, only three or four centuries old, born in the seventeenth century, destined to flower in the eighteenth, transformed in the nineteenth into something quite unlovely if different from the original sensibility, and it has been revived in our own century as a concept that would barely have been recognized by its originators in the Restoration.

Professor Hagstrum believes that the two ideas—sex and sensibility—must be juxtaposed if one hopes to understand either. He does not posit a causal or dialectical connection but a parallel one, and he has no trouble discovering the origins of either sex or sensibility in the literate English imagination. They lie unequivocally, he argues, in Milton and Dryden, not in Shakespeare. Once Hagstrum has surmounted this ferocious problem of "origins," he traces the evolution of both concepts to their decline and demise in the age of Jane Austen. Had Hagstrum continued through the Victorians and Edwardians and up to our own time, he would no doubt have shown us that Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility" is a very different notion of sensibility from that found, for example, in the age of Richardson.

Milton and Dryden are the heroes of Hagstrum's book because they are "founders." Milton is the father of English sensibility while Dryden is "the pioneer of modern love," and although Richardson and Rousseau may be the two greatest exponents of sensibility, first credit must go to these earlier writers.

The reasons are not mysterious: sex was first presented to literate Englishmen, Hagstrum argues, in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*. Thereafter, Dryden formulated the sensibility that would later be idolized into cults by focusing in his tragedies on the extremes of love and sex: incest, madness, suicide. And if Dryden, influential as he was in

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the eighteenth-century literary imagination, had not established the basic vehicle—situations of desperate love—there would have been no movement, no cults of sensibility, no Richardson, no Smollett, no Sterne, no Mackenzie, and none of the other writers who composed what we now inchoately call the literature of sentiment or sensibility.

It is a good thesis, one that scholars will have to take into account for a long time to come. Among its strengths is the frisson with which it demarcates Shakespeare and Dryden. Love and sex, of course, are everywhere in Shakespeare, but without the extremity found in Dryden and his followers: Aphra Behn, Congreve, Lee, Otway, Rowe. It is a thesis, moreover, which teaches us, once again, to beware of the anachronistic idolatry of Shakespeare that certainly did not exist in the Restoration and eighteenth century: Milton, not Shakespeare, was then the great authority in the domains of love and sex. The idea seems unassailable; but we violate it all the time.

But what is the vital link between sex and sensibility? It is, as Hagstrum explains, the idealizing of heterosexual friendship within marriage, and this is exactly what is found as such a pervasive theme in Milton's writings. Spenser, to be sure, had begged for such friendship as an integral part of marriage before Milton wrote. But Spenser never attained the stature of Milton, certainly not in the two centuries after his death, as his critical heritage shows.

Before Milton, the average Englishman knew barely anything about prelapsarian sex and he viewed marriage as essentially sexual or tyrannous; afterward, marriage changed into something different, a state based on passion *within* friendship. Concomitant with this alteration was an idealized rather than literal conception of woman. This is why *eros* and *filia* were so important to the Restoration and eighteenth century, and why *nomos* and *agape* assumed lesser positions. *Nomos* indeed remained the love within marriage, but now that marriage was altogether transformed by Milton—according to Hagstrum, never again to be restored—the old *nomos* was no longer valid.

Yet Hagstrum detects an even more crucial discernment than this. With the idealization of women and of heterosexual friendship

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there arose a tenderizing or softening attitude to physical passion: this, au fond, is sensibility. After Milton, sensibility was no longer the intellection over moral judgment it had been in the Renaissance; nor was it yet the naked emotionalism—the bare heart without the awakened head—it would later become. Sensibility circa 1700 was not anything merely physical (the result of the senses) or mental (an epistemology that could be anatomized). It was, rather, a way of knowing, an actual gestalt, a frame of mind about love. And more than anything else, it was a dynamic process that generated emotions of tenderness in those devoted to it. For this reason it held great appeal for the upper classes—the bored gentle sect—who found themselves attuned to its refinements and wooed by its potential to discover a wholly new structure to erotic love.

Hagstrum is not troubled by masses of recent historical research, especially by Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500–1800*, Randolph Trumbach, Peter Laslett, Christopher Hill, and others who may contradict his conclusions, or by recent polemics by R. S. Crane, Donald Greene, and myself over the origins of sensibility—not only what it was but also how and why it started. Committed to a belief that the literature of every age necessarily concerns itself with love rather than with marriage or the family, Hagstrum lays down his first law—that Milton was the founder of sensibility—and then charts its evolution through *Clarissa*, *Tristram Shandy* and *Sense and Sensibility*. In Hagstrum's view, the English literature of sex and sensibility is practically a footnote on Milton, or at least on Dryden, and every English author of any stature between Swift and Shelley is studied for his capacity to respond to Milton's theory of idealized love.

Readers whose interests lie in particular authors between, say, Milton and Wordsworth will probably not discover in this book new readings of their favorite works. Even the excellent chapter on Dryden loses impact by attention to only one play—*All for Love*—when many more works need to be scrutinized to establish Dryden as "the pioneer of modern love" and as a throbbing sensualist. But there are strengths elsewhere, notably in the book's conception and in its courage to isolate Milton so daringly at a time when, at least in the Anglo-American world, he has rather fewer readers than at any moment since the decline of Romanticism and the rise of decadence. In my estimate, *Sex and Sensibility* may do more to arouse interest in Milton than a dozen specialized monographs.

Just one further point needs to be made, again in evidence of strength. The subtitle of this book is *Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart*, and it is crucial to notice that the sister arts are here abundantly discussed. Hagstrum is well known for his previous studies of the theory *ut pictura poesis*, particularly in the period from 1600 to 1800. Painters and composers are also studied in *Sex and Sensibility* in a concluding chapter that, in addition to providing an overview of love in painting and music, isolates Handel and Mozart, Watteau and Greuze. If it is difficult to analyze sex and sensibility in music, an art without a linguistic vocabulary, painting nevertheless lends itself to this kind of treatment, and particularly the tradition of erotic painting. Hagstrum demonstrates why Watteau must be viewed in this light, and provides an excellent analysis of *Le pèlerinage à l'Ile de Cythère*, a painting whose profundity has too often been minimized. The level of analysis in this concluding chapter is so filled with insight that this reader, at least, wished Hagstrum had omitted all literature after Dryden and devoted the rest of his energy to the painters of the Restoration and eighteenth century. The chapter is a triumph in literature and other disciplines, an application American critics such as Hagstrum are perfecting.

Time alone will tell how *Sex and Sensibility* will sit with classicists, medievalists, and Renaissancists, to say nothing of Shakespeareans who may not agree that Milton is the father of "the ideal of heterosexual friendship in marriage," on which everything else here depends. In time, also, it will be evident that this account is not the whole of the unfolding of sensibility: a development in the history of consciousness that, if we wish to understand it, requires scrutiny of many domains in addition to imaginative literature. No, it is far from the whole story; it is but one version and, although it may see too much through eighteenth-century eyes, it has the virtue of understanding that no art form can

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capture the problems of ideal and erotic love so well as great imaginative literature. But better to see this complex terrain through the fine lens of the Restoration and eighteenth century than to misconstrue the most adult period in the whole sweep of English literature.

Talking It Up

FIRST-PERSON AMERICA. *Edited by Ann Banks. Knopf. $13.95.*

Reviewed by DENNIS M. READ

First-Person America is another product of something popularly called oral history. It contains a selection of eighty personal histories from more than ten thousand that were compiled during the late 1930s by Federal Writers' Project members based on interviews mostly with working-class people. Except for such jazz musicians as Muggsy Spanier and Bud Jacobson, these people are faces in the crowd. Their lives would have been neglected, their words would have been forgotten, if not for the Federal Writers' Project.

Yet, as Pascal wrote, no one dies so poor that he does not leave something behind. The problem is ours; *our* neglect, *our* loss of memory. *First-Person America* claims to bequeath us with an inheritance we had not known about. But what exactly is this inheritance? None of these eighty first-person histories is a verbatim transcript. Because the interviews were conducted before the advent of the tape recorder, they are reconstructions of one or several conversations between the storyteller and the Federal Writers' Project member. These reconstructions, furthermore, cut out the part of the interviewer; they are rendered as soliloquies, and in their seamless web no other voice intrudes upon that of the storyteller. This device obviously is intended to bring about a direct relationship between the storyteller and the reader. However well intentioned that device, we should not forget that in *First-Person America* we are always at

DENNIS M. READ is an assistant professor of English at Denison University

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Poetry in Shakespeare's Sonnets
by Hallett Smith

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1981, 172 pp., illus., index $15

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one remove from the storyteller. The words we read are those the interviewer remembers; the dialect, what the interviewer hears; the veritable presence of the storyteller, what the interviewer is able to conjure.

Even if we grant tape-recording fidelity to the interviewer, we must still deal with the problem of selection. How did the interviewer decide whom to interview? Accessibility is one factor. Whom can the interviewer find? Where does he have to go to find that person? But interest is a more important factor. Who tells the best story? (Or, more precisely, whose story is worth retelling?) Of the more than ten thousand stories that were retold, Ann Banks, the editor of *First-Person America,* selected these eighty on the basis of "immediacy." There remains another kind of selection to be done by the interviewer, for what he usually has after the interview is more a conversation than a story. Conversations are by nature uneven, redundant, structurally loose. We do not, for instance, notice any attention to verbal economy in the most important work of oral history in our time, the Watergate tapes. For the sake of readability, then, the interviewer is compelled to select and arrange those parts of the conversation which form a story and to delete the rest. Banks admits that she has performed further surgery in order to produce these neat and tidy stories. All this emendation has been done silently, with not so much as ellipses where words are missing, so that we can never know how close we really are to the storyteller, or how much the interviewer or editor has intervened.

These observations would not especially matter if the book were presented as something other than a collection of historical documents. Unfortunately, that is not the case, for *First-Person America* claims to present an authentic social history of the United States between the 1860s and the 1930s. Yet historical truth, like any truth, requires documentation and verifiability. That is why it is important to know as much as possible about the sources of these stories and the nature of their transmission. In addition, the stories themselves ought to be historically accountable. The details in them should be checked; figures and dates should be verified; personal accounts of public events should be compared to other available information. *First-Person America* does not concern itself with any of these tasks. Yet when we find that one storyteller is a full decade off in naming the current year, perhaps we should wonder about the accuracy of other accounts in the book.

To say these accounts are unverified is not to say they are untrue, however, and perhaps it is improper to require *First-Person America* to carry out such authentication. But as one reads the book, one becomes aware of an implicit theme in it: the people presented to us are individuals who have all suffered various kinds of oppression. Their work has been devalued or made irrelevant; their race, sex, or ethnic origin has hampered them; their very lives have been sacrificed to an indifferent system. An Italian who became a stonecutter in Vermont bitterly states: "We give our whole strength, our hearing, our hands, our sight, the eyes, everything we possess to the business. We give our lives, our family, we give everything we have and love, and then what do we get out of it? Just a little money." This kind of hyperbole comes out of the certainly genuine hazards of stonecutting: the earsplitting noise, the finger-smashing tools, the granite dust which irritated the eyes and in time caused silicosis and death before a full life span. It is a more extreme statement than most others in the book (another is more succinct: "You ain't an iron worker unless you get killed"), but the speakers' feelings of frustration and sacrifice are consistent features in all the narratives. Yet all these individuals persevere, going on with their lives in one form or another, refusing to be beaten down by forces and circumstances beyond their control. The stonecutter's statement relies on a sense of pathos for its strength, and the collection of eighty stories leads the reader to a truism of tragedy: these people are doomed but not defeated.

In these people, *First-Person America* seems to argue, lies a vital strength of the United States. Their will to survive and their willingness to keep on working in spite of diminishing returns indicate a toughness and resilience in the working class (a meat packer comments, "Guess after you been working thirty years at one job you don't need much else except habit to keep you going"). These qualities also expose a lack of justice and the prevailing forms of exploitation in the America of their times. Their stories give the lie to

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one cliché—land of the free—while endorsing another—home of the brave.

And this is the problem of *First-Person America.* It dresses a myth as old as America itself in the robes of history. The myth comes out of the belief that the golden age lies in the past, when life was full of opportunities and the going was good. Out of this assembly of homesteaders, peddlers, miners, union organizers, tobacco warehouse workers, medicine show pitchmen, cotton mill workers, and jazz musicians waft lamenting, wistful nevermores: "A machine can pick coal faster than a man and when it ain't working it don't have to eat"; "It's a good life and there used to be big money in it. Not no more, though" (a Cape Cod fisherman); "It was a good racket while it lasted, but it's shot to pieces now" (a whorehouse madam). To cast these statements as the simple causal equation of the oppressors squashing the oppressed is just as wrong as to assert that the flip side myth of American progress and equal opportunity is valid and historically verifiable.

The Federal Writers' Project members who collected these stories may well have been predisposed to certain conclusions about the lot of working-class Americans, and they may have looked for verification of these conclusions in what they heard and recorded. Many of these members, among them Nelson Algren, Ralph Ellison, and Jack Conroy (who each contribute interviews to the collection) went on to write their own novels and stories containing gleanings from their interviews. The Federal Writers' Project undoubtedly contributed to the life of American letters through this nurturing of a number of important writers. But that contribution also may have been at the cost of historical verisimilitude. It is finally impossible to know how much of this composite picture of depression-age America is invented—or even who is inventing it.

But the truth of the tale is in the telling, and many of the tales in *First-Person America* are worth preserving. One comes from a tobacco farmer remembering the day a preacher stood in the creek to baptize girls who would wade, one by one, out to him. "The girls' dresses would float up around their waists," he recalled, "and the preacher would poke em down with his cane." This is, in fact, the pattern of all the lives contained

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in *First-Person America:* a simple, buoyant rising; a sudden, forceful pushing down. The lure of storytelling is also described in those two different motions. Telling history and telling stories are two very separate activities. History, as Stephen Dedalus told us long ago, is the nightmare from which we wish to awaken; stories, he might have added, are what we tell each other in the meantime. On this point we should listen carefully to the words spoken by the obligatory prostitute (no collection of oral history seems to be complete without one) in *First-Person America:* "You got to lie to *everybody,* you can't believe *nobody*—but still sometimes you got to believe *something* that *somebody* says, but most of all you got to lie to yourself." This need for self-deception is essential to all of us, and it helps to explain why people have always invented stories to tell to each other. Could we ever go on without them? Certainly not when our luck runs out and times become difficult. If we wish to look for the common source of strength in Americans of the depression—perhaps in any group of people of any time—we should learn about their lies and how they worked to believe in them. In that impulse lies much of the human will to endure. *First-Person America* helps us to know better that quality of storytelling.

Digs

POEMS: 1965–1975. *By Seamus Heaney. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $12.95.*

PREOCCUPATIONS: SELECTED PROSE, 1968–1978. *By Seamus Heaney. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $15.*

Reviewed by W. S. DI PIERO

From the exemplary careers of Yeats, Pound, and Eliot, the contemporary poet has inherited a definition of poetic office that requires him to be a bearer and interpreter of cultural history and to demand of himself a constant internal ordering of learning, belief, intent, theme, and method. There is also, however, a sort of auxiliary office to which poets are appointed, a public frame clapped together from current taste, public relations, high critical opinion, and the goodwill of influential publishers. Under these circumstances, rumor, partisanship, and all the other devices that contribute to the manufacture of fame collaborate to install a poet in a position of eminence. The Irish poet Seamus Heaney, now in his early forties, is the latest to receive such privileged regard.

Since 1965, Heaney has published five major volumes of verse; the most recent, *Field Work* (1979), was brought out in America by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. That same publisher has now collected Heaney's first four books and has issued as a companion volume a gathering of prose pieces. Such attention is so rare among major publishers that one hopes, almost as a reflex, that this recently assigned public office will in no way disrupt or distract Heaney from the more traditional task of the poet, which is, in the end, the only one that counts.

Heaney has a clear picture of the internal career—that arc of need, design, and execution—which urges and steers a poet through his themes. Like his modern predecessors, he takes his duties seriously. His work, poetry and prose alike, is rooted in the need to penetrate, claim, and express the rough exigencies of history. He seeks coherence and continuity. "Digging," the opening poem in *Death of a Naturalist* (Heaney's first major book) and the initial poem in this new collection, announces the work that will follow. Writing by a window, the poet hears the "clean rasping sound" of his father digging turf, and in that sound hears his grandfather's work before him. Digging becomes at once a signal of origins and legacies and a sounding of Heaney's own poetic ambitions. He has "no spade to follow men like them," so he will dig instead with his pen: "Between my finger and my thumb/ The squat pen rests./ I'll dig with it." The metaphor is meant to articulate the method by which the poet will carry on, while at the same time departing from, the family tradition. Although the fancy may be somewhat strained and self-important, Heaney's intention is clear enough: he wants connections, continuities, and historical justification for his art.

In one essential particular the truth of the metaphor is redeemed, for in many of his

✪ W. S. DI PIERO, who teaches English at Northwestern University, is the author of a chapbook of poems entitled *Solstice.*

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poems Heaney does dig with his pen, excavating, unearthing histories of families, country, and self. But in the poem's opening lines, he also describes the feel of the pen in his hand as "snug as a gun." The figure is at first glance rather impressive, and its apparent authority is boosted by the clicking backward rhyme; but what has this terrorist image to do with agriculture, archaeology, or intellectual exertion of any sort? I question the integrity of this core metaphor because it prefigures a larger problem in Heaney's work, one I shall return to presently. But it must be said that his ambition, which is in almost every way admirable and pure, does on occasion lead him to will connections by virtue of overwrought metaphor, leading him into good writing which is not always good poetry.

The danger for someone of Heaney's abundant talent is that his aspiration will spiral his work away from integral metaphoric truth. But when the two, aspiration and metaphoric truth, are unified, the poetry is exact, deliberate, and natural, as in "At a Potato Digging": "Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble toward the black / Mother. Processional stooping through the turf / Recurs mindlessly as autumn." This poem is an extraordinary meditation on natural dependencies, Irish sorrow, the body as bearer of history, the legacies of deprivation and blight. The language has the gritty sonority one hears in Dante:

> Stinking potatoes fouled the land,
> pits turned pus into filthy mounds:
> and where potato diggers are
> you still smell the running sore.

The dark that figures in Heaney's *Door into the Dark* is near and actual: it's the dark of stables, turf stacks, forges. And the landscapes bounding the darkness are sharply drawn, as are the characters who live and work among them; implicated in their surroundings at every turn, their lives become dramatic inflections of land and light. Here, as in *Death of a Naturalist,* there are lyrical portraits of ordinary people serving functions usually conferred upon them by history. Peat gatherers, diggers, dockers, thatchers, diviners, farmwives—all take on an unexpected radiance in these poems. Heaney catches the den-

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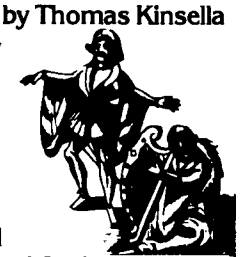

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sity of their lives with the same passionate disinterest and attention that he gives to the densities of the mineral world, to the slippery entrapments of boglands ("Melting and opening underfoot, / Missing its last definition / By millions of years"). He works the language hard, just as one of his favorite subjects is a world hard worked, caught in its plenitude of actions, turnings, recognitions. Here, for example, in "Mother":

> I am tired of the feeding of stock.
> Each evening I labor this handle
> Half an hour at a time, the cows
> Guzzling at bowls in the byre.
> Before I have topped up the level
> They lower it down.

The poems in Heaney's *Wintering Out* grow almost predictably from his desire to explore primal resources and primal connections between landscape, language, and men. Presences are defined by the sounds and structures of words: "*Anahorish*, soft gradient / of consonant, vowel-meadow"; "To shear, to bale and bleach and card / Unwound from the spools / Of his vowels"; "Our guttural muse / was bulled long ago / by the alliterative tradition." It's in *Wintering Out* that Heaney argues, with fine intelligence, for the world as a language to be heard and entered, a language bounded, inflected, and impelled by regional history. The most remarkable poem, however, is "The Tollund Man," a profound wish for the company of the dead, for the violent knowledge they withhold. He would dig into the layers of preserved time, into the stratified anguish of Irish history, and become a resident in "the old man-killing parishes," locked in the earth, "lost, / Unhappy and at home."

A poet often writes prose to articulate an investigative technique or explanatory procedure, by which his intended discovery, probably initially intuited, may be claimed and justified. An exhibition of need and will, it's also an act of self-declaration. The essays in *Preoccupations* demonstrate Heaney's aspirations, his awareness of his own position in the larger poetic tradition, and an account of those patterns of exploration which comprise the nervous system of his verse. Heaney is almost obsessively concerned with what we might call the natural history of language, its origins, morphologies, homologies. Whatever the occasion—childhood, farm life, politics and culture in Northern Ireland, other poets past and present—Heaney strikes time and again at the taproot of language, examining its genetic structures, trying to discover how it has served, in all its changes, as a culture bearer, a world to contain imaginations, at once a rhetorical weapon and nutriment of spirit. He writes of these matters with rare discrimination and resourcefulness, and a winning impatience with the received wisdom. In his essay on Hopkins, for example, he describes and analyzes one kind of poetics which regards the emergence of poetry as a feminine action, "almost parthenogenetic," a seeping forth of language that "tends to brood and creep, crop and cluster, with a texture of echo and implication, trawling the pool of the ear with a net of associations." In another essay, Wordsworth's "hiding places of my power" provide an occasion for Heaney to announce his own view of poetry: "poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity, with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds . . . poetry as a dig."

Heaney's essays are studded with reiterated phrases and notions, but such repetition is less a sign of indolence than of a coherent and strong-willed intellect testing, tuning, and revising its themes. We hear more than once of Eliot's "auditory imagination" and "dark embryo," of Yeats's "bundle of accident and incoherence," of Shakespeare's "Our Poesy is as a gum which oozes / From whence tis nourished." And to these Heaney contributes his own passionate, conspiratorial language: of poems "earthed" in provincial recognitions, of words "as bearers of history and mystery." The very selectivity of quotation, its rather narrow range, indicates Heaney's predilections. I believe a poet reveals the vision he has of his career in part by revealing those predecessors he chooses to ignore as much as by those he claims as occasions for statements about his own work. Without faulting Heaney's choices, one would at the same time very much like to hear him on Browning (Heaney's own dramatic monologues are very fine), and on the rural Hardy of the "feel of old terrestrial stress" and "Earth's old glooms and pains," and on W. S. Graham.

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At every point, Heaney shows himself a discriminating and intense diagnostician of the poètic tradition. He brilliantly explains the way in which poetry issues from the roughly shaped, vaguely stirring beginnings in intuition and compulsion. He draws firm distinctions between his predecessors, clarifying that diversity (and divisiveness) which gives such quarrelsome vitality to poetic tradition. Here he is, for example, on Keats and Hopkins: "Keats has the life of a swarm, fluent and merged; Hopkins has the design of the honeycomb, definite and loaded. In Keats the rhythm is narcotic, in Hopkins it is a stimulant to the mind. Keats woos us to receive, Hopkins alerts us to perceive."

The most crucial distinction Heaney makes regarding the writing of poetry is that between craft, which is "the skill of making," and technique, which "involves not only a poet's way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture; it involves also a definition of his stance toward life, a definition of his own reality. It involves the discovery of ways to go out of his normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art."

North, the last volume collected in *Poems: 1965–1975*, suffers from the dominion of craft over technique. The territory, as in all of Heaney's books, is clearly demarcated. *North* is in large part an anthology of death chants, songs of bones and boglands, anatomizations of the body of language and history, another dig into the geological strata of culture, its residues, seepages, signs. A number of the poems, however, like the early "Digging," demonstrate the triumph of rhetoric over theme, of mere good writing over investigative vision. By "mere good writing" I mean exclusive attention to the sheen and noise of language, such that flamboyance and invention, however sincere and in service to however serious a theme, come to displace clarity and integrity of feeling. Poems like "Bog Queen," "The Grauballe Man," and "Kinship," which at first shine forth with the sort of writing that one might praise for its ingenuity and intensity, are finally so clenched, or so overwrought in metaphor, that they inevitably become little more than a stage on

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which the poet performs. When style comes unstuck from feeling, subject matter dissociated from thematic explorations, the result is the kind of poem that bullies the reader into admiration. There were traces of this in Heaney's earlier work. I've already noted the pen/gun/spade figure in "Digging." But there are other instances: blackberries that "burned / Like a plate of eyes"; "stepping stones like black molars"; a cow's eyes as "shallow bowls."

I make this perhaps harsh judgment in the light of the passionate intelligence and sensitivity to natural technique which distinguish much of Heaney's work. Given the quality of some of the poetry in *North* ("Gunfire barks its question off Cavehill / And the profiled basalt maintains its stare / South: proud, protestant and northern, and male. / Adam untouched, before the shock of gender"), the following lines, from "Bone Dreams," seem by contrast a great rattling of words, manner unattached from feeling:

> Come back past
> philology and kennings,
> re-enter memory
> where the bone's lair
>
> is a love-nest
> in the grass.
> I hold my lady's head
> like a crystal
>
> and ossify myself
> by gazing: I am screes
> on her escarpments,
> a chalk giant
>
> carved upon her downs.
> Soon my hands, on the sunken
> fosse of her spine
> move towards the passes.

I'm not suggesting that Seamus Heaney is going stale, or that his inspiration is failing, or that he is writing too much. I do, however, feel obliged to say that at this point in his work, now that the public office has imposed itself upon the private, and now that *Field Work* has shown that he still has not resolved what seem to me major questions of craft and vision (questions appropriately asked only of a poet of unmistakably major talent), he may now need to be more vigilant than ever. A poet's career is always in the making—or remaking—and it is essential not to mistake fine craft for true feeling. Handsomely varnished surfaces are no fit substitutes for intricately deep beauty.

Buried Secrets

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE IN HIS TIMES. *By James R. Mellow. Houghton Mifflin. $19.95.*
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: A BIOGRAPHY. *By Arlin Turner. Oxford University Press. $20.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL GORRA

In 1883, James R. Mellow reports, in concluding the more interesting of these two biographies, that Nathaniel Hawthorne's son, Julian, while researching his own double-decker study of his parents, visited Herman Melville. Though Melville's conversation wandered, Julian wrote that he did say "several interesting things, among which the most remarkable was that he was convinced Hawthorne had all his life concealed some great secret which would, were it known, explain all the mysteries of his career." Julian Hawthorne did not do much with the hint, but any modern biographer—Mellow and the late Arlin Turner included—immediately feels the justice of Melville's insight. For although the shape of Hawthorne's early life has been known since the late 1940s, when Robert Cantwell and Randall Stewart dispelled Julian's romantically melancholy picture of that life, the biographical materials that could give substance to that shape do not appear to exist. In particular, very little beyond a bare outline is known about the first third of Hawthorne's life, until his graduation from Bowdoin College in 1825, or about the twelve years between that graduation and the publication of *Twice-Told Tales*, during which Hawthorne did little but write and study Puritan history—Cantwell's painstaking reconstruction of his every whist party aside.

In consequence, Hawthorne's formation as a man and as a writer occupies somewhat less

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than one-fourth of each of these biographies, and neither Turner nor Mellow indulges in much speculation about that formation (although Mellow's footnotes do make suggestions about Hawthorne's sexual fears). Instead, Turner concentrates on the known facts of Hawthorne's life and on his work, specifically on the several collections of short stories which he planned during his apprenticeship but which never materialized. Mellow, like Cantwell, concentrates on the surface texture of Hawthorne's life and times—his friends, the layout of his various houses, even the foods he ate. But he does allow himself an epigraph from Freud which provides *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* with a delicately handled and largely unobtrusive thesis, and which, while particularly appropriate to Hawthorne, serves more generally as a statement about the art of biography, and a warning to those who practice it: "Every dream has at least one point at which it is unfathomable; a central point, as it were, connecting it with the unknown." For Mellow, Hawthorne's secret, like the face of his character the Reverend Mr. Hooper, remains concealed behind a veil, albeit one fashioned not of black cloth but of a reticence that extended to his notebooks and perhaps to his private meditations as well.

Despite Mellow's warning, however, one must ask whether Hawthorne's secret was based upon some concrete experience or if it existed solely as an insubstantial quality of mind. Until his marriage to Sophia Peabody in 1842, Hawthorne appears to have feared one thing above all: the death of the heart through a passion for knowledge and observation. Many of his characters suffer from a similar passion: Roger Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*; Miles Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*, who couples it with an inability to act; or Ethan Brand, whose quest for knowledge at the expense of the heart leads him to commit the undefined but nevertheless Unpardonable Sin. This is perhaps as close as one can come to naming the "great secret." Still, one wonders about the importance of an incident to which neither biographer pays much attention, and which seems analogous to Henry James's mysterious hurt. At age nine, while playing with a bat and ball, Haw-

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thorne suffered an accident which forced him to use crutches for over a year, and which was feared would lame him for life. Neither the precise details nor the date are clear; what is clear is that while Hawthorne enjoyed missing school, the accident also forced him to become an observer rather than a participant in Salem life. During his convalescence, Hawthorne spent long hours in solitary reading, a solitude he continued—and later half-jokingly cursed—when he began to wander through the Maine woods, to which his family moved when he was fourteen. While the importance he placed on his injury isn't known, this combination of events does seem to have turned him from a fractious, lively child into an extraordinarily quiet young man.

This reticence produced in Hawthorne a personal elusiveness that extends to his fiction. Even after a long acquaintance with his work, one feels very little confidence in advancing anything more than a tentative, groping statement about it—largely because of his attitude toward his characters. He distances himself from them, partly through a prose style slightly antique even at its original publication, and partly through a reluctance to make definitive statements about them. He allows them to remain inscrutable, apparently believing that their inner characters could not be fully known. But he also believed that character revealed itself in action, so he hovers closely over the surface of their lives; his description of Hepzibah's preparations for opening her shop in *The House of the Seven Gables* is a good example. He admired Dickens and Trollope for their depictions of society, but felt that he could not write that sort of book himself. Yet, as Mellow notes, Hawthorne filled his journals with just this kind of description. And his chapter on Judge Pyncheon's death in *The House of the Seven Gables* is stylistically close to Dickens's third-person narrator in *Bleak House*, while the essay on men and manners in Salem called "The Custom-House," with which he prefaced *The Scarlet Letter*, contains perhaps his finest prose.

"The Custom-House" is remarkable largely because of the coy bravado Hawthorne employs in describing his loss in 1849 of a patronage job at the Salem Custom House. Hawthorne plays with his material and, in fact, with his readers, teasing them, leading them on, but always maintaining his distance. R. P. Blackmur considered this play the frame that Hawthorne dropped between evil and the experience of evil. Henry James viewed it as the way in which Hawthorne was able to make the "heavy moral burden" of his Calvinist heritage "evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production." James called Hawthorne's art that of the "moral picturesque," a phrase that does not make much sense until one remembers that the picturesque in nineteenth-century American landscape painting lay halfway between the beautiful and the sublime. The picturesque provides a way of controlling, of modulating, the terror of the sublime to make it more acceptable, more comfortable. In Hawthorne, the moral picturesque lies in the play of his style. It is responsible for much of the peculiar quality of his fiction, and also for its charm—but in that word *charm* lies its limitations.

Hawthorne himself seemed in some sense aware of this. Writing of Melville, he said: "He persists . . . in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other." Hawthorne could rarely bring himself to wander, not even with Melville, who offered him the chance to travel through the soul in a rich friendship. Melville's recent biographer, Edwin Miller, suggests that Hawthorne kept his distance because he suspected Melville found him sexually attractive, but that claim is largely unsubstantiated and, in Mellow's eyes, reductive. Both Mellow and Turner treat the Hawthorne-Melville relationship as a far more complicated affair between two spirits of genius; Mellow's discussion of the extremely physical terms in which friendship was discussed in the nineteenth century seems particularly valuable.

Hawthorne could not open himself completely to anyone, not even to Sophia. He controlled himself too tightly for that, perhaps because he was afraid of what he might find if he did not preserve his distance from experience, or at least from the expression of experience. In a very few works—his most

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successful ones, I think—he comes close to losing that distance: "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (although the closing paragraphs mar his glimpse of the hard sublime), and *The Scarlet Letter.* But critics found the latter too gloomy, said it needed more sunshine; the flawed sentimental ending of *The House of the Seven Gables* was the result.

For Hawthorne agreed with his critics. Early in his career, as Mellow notes, he made the connection between sin and creation. James claimed that the sense of sin in Hawthorne's work is of an "almost exclusively *imported* character," but one can more accurately say that those light and charming fumes made that work possible by keeping the sense of sin at bay. Hawthorne strove to make himself different from other men, but did not always feel comfortable with that difference. His closest friends were politicians and businessmen rather than writers, and he spent ten years in the prime of his creative life away from literature, working first as a customs official and later as U.S. consul in Liverpool, a position to which he was appointed by his college friend, Franklin Pierce, in 1853. Hawthorne was motivated by financial necessity, but when he needed employment he always gravitated toward the practical world and took great pleasure in performing his duties with a smooth, hard-headed efficiency.

Yet this practicality is linked to one of his work's characteristic strengths—the man of affairs's self-assuredness one finds in his sketches that is typical of such English novelists as Henry Fielding—and to much of what makes him attractive as a man. Hawthorne was a good consul, generally a shrewd businessman, and apparently an excellent father and husband. He also saw through the high-minded cant that permeated Concord's transcendentalism. Although he spent most of 1841 in residence at Brook Farm, he went there not out of idealism but because he thought communal living might provide him with the means to support a wife. He had little use for the companionship of dreamers and, though he admired Thoreau's crankiness, never felt close to such neighbors as Emerson or Alcott. Reform movements irritated him; in particular, he could summon little sympa-

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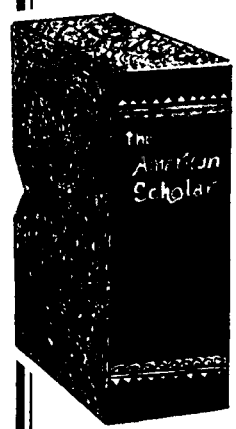

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thy for abolitionists, remaining a staunch Democrat in a time and place where that position took a certain courage. One suspects, however, that he began adult life with few political convictions and hardened into conservatism only gradually, in reaction to the shabby sentimentalism that so often undercut the reform movements of his time.

In his last years, Hawthorne was a bitter, curmudgeonly man possessed of a diseased humor brought on by a combination of the Civil War and his failed powers as a fiction writer. At the end, he could no longer fully summon the sense of play that had framed his obsessions; this may in part be due to the lingering horror of his daughter Una's near death from Roman fever in 1858–59. He left several unfinished, and unfinishable, manuscripts and died—Turner says of a brain tumor—while on a trip through New Hampshire with Franklin Pierce in May 1864, two months before his sixtieth birthday.

Turner and Mellow agree in the main about the quality of Hawthorne's life. Mellow places more stress upon the unknown and problematic aspects of his character, but there are, on the whole, few areas in which their interpretations are at odds. They have, however, written very different books. Turner's *Nathaniel Hawthorne* is the lucid, graceful distillation of a lifetime spent studying his subject. He has used an admirably judicious hand in selecting excerpts from letters and journals; the book contains very little repetition of the sort that mars today's dull double-decker biographies, such as Michael Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey*. Turner's occasional psychological speculations are deftly and subtly done, but the book is not written to demonstrate a particular thesis about Hawthorne or his work. A sound, steady volume, it is always reliable and never irritating.

But it is not as interesting as Mellow's *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times*, the first of a planned group of four interlocking biographies. The next volume, now in progress, will deal with Margaret Fuller, a woman Hawthorne admired but did not much like; books on Emerson and Thoreau will follow. Mellow, whose only other book was a study of Gertrude Stein and her circle, has as his stated aim the re-creation of the texture, not just of Hawthorne's life, but of intellectual life in nineteenth-century New England as a whole. To do this, he has paid more attention than Turner to "circumstantial details," to the pots and pans of history, as well as to the minor figures in Hawthorne's life, whom he often judges harshly. I suspect he stands on questionable ground more often than Turner does, and his style is occasionally cute, annoying, or inelegant. But this rather wonderfully gossipy book often rises to an insight and penetration of which Turner's study isn't capable, especially when dealing with the relationship between Hawthorne and Melville—in particular, Mellow's suggestion that their relationship may have provided a model for the fictional one of Coverdale and Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*. And finally, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* contains a description of Hawthorne and Thoreau floating on an ice floe down the Concord River one winter in the 1840s, a description very nearly as evocative of the world Mellow's continuing project plans to replicate as one of Hawthorne's own sketches.

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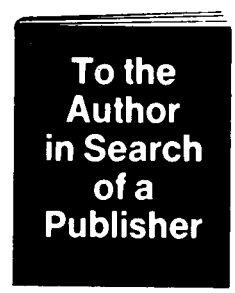

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For the Record

Setting It Straight

FREDERICK MORGAN

What do you do when someone tells a lie about you or puts one into print? Many years ago my father gave me some advice on this subject. A peaceable man, he was at the time uncharacteristically engaged in a controversy about some civic matter. I seem to recall that it had something to do with Washington Square, with which, as a longtime Village resident, he was always greatly and constructively concerned. "Don't worry about vituperation, or the mere expression of anger or hatred," he said, "but if there is a misstatement of fact, don't let it stand uncorrected." "Why's that?" I asked. (I was twelve or thirteen at the time.) "Because," he replied, "people discount anger and malice as such, but a misstatement of fact, if not corrected, may stick and be believed. It may even stick if you do correct it. So be sure to set it straight," he went on, "just for the record."

In the thirty-odd years that I have been an editor of the *Hudson Review*, I have had many occasions to remember my father's advice. And in most cases, at least in matters of any substance, I have followed it. At a time when, in certain sectors of our society, language has been debased almost beyond recognition, I persist in believing that the truth is important, that writers are responsible for the accuracy of what they write, and that newspapers, magazines, and other publications should be held accountable for the truth and accuracy of what they publish.

These reflections were brought to mind again by a contribution in a recent issue of *Partisan Review* (volume 48, number 2, Spring 1981). Riffling through the pages of our exchange copy, two or three weeks after its arrival at our office, I came across the following sentence (top of page 246): "It was a time when young men would not be accepted in the *Hudson Review*." Struck at once by the evident mendacity of this statement (since there never was such "a time"), I read through the entire piece—an interview with a writer named Gilbert Sorrentino by an interviewer named Dennis Barone. Two or three days later, I sent off the following letter to the editor of *Partisan Review:*

Dear Editor,

"It was a time [the mid-fifties] when young men would not be accepted in *The Hudson Review*." Thus Gilbert Sorrentino, in your current issue. He and his interviewer, Dennis Barone, go on to single out the late Paul Blackburn's "magnificent" Provençal translations as an outstanding example of work done by "men of my age" who had "no place to publish" and who accordingly had to publish themselves.

However, it was precisely in *The Hudson Review* (Spring 1952) that Blackburn first published a group of his translations from Guillem de Peitau, Raimbautz de Vaqueiras, and Peire Vidal (the original Provençal texts were included). That same issue contained work by such other young writers as George P. Elliott, Joseph Frank, Anthony Hecht, Joseph Kerman, Vivian Mercier, James Merrill, W. S. Merwin, and Sonya Rudikoff. Among the dozens of young men, and women, whose work *The Hudson Review* published in the mid-fifties, were Daniel Aaron, Herbert Gold, Howard Nemerov, Louis Simpson, R. W. B. Lewis, William Alfred, Richard Howard, Philip Booth, William Meredith, Robert Martin Adams, Alan Friedman, Ann Stanford, Donald Hall, Irving Singer, A. R. Ammons, Louis O. Coxe, Donald Justice, William Eastlake, John Hollander, Jean Garrigue, James Wright, Harvey Swados, Irving Howe, Guy Davenport, Ruth Fainlight, Charles Tomlinson, Benjamin De Mott, and B. L. Reid. The Spring and Autumn 1957 issues featured the work of poets under forty, including Ammons, Hayden Carruth, James Dickey, William Dickey, Hecht, Daniel Hoffman, Justice, Meredith, Simpson, W. D. Snodgrass, Wright, and five or six others.

We did not, it is true, publish the work of Gilbert Sorrentino.

Finally, since Ezra Pound is in Sorrentino's opinion "by far the most important literary figure of the 20th century," let me point out that at a time when other magazines, including *Partisan Review*, were either neglecting or attacking Pound, it

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was *The Hudson Review* which was publishing Pound's work: "The Analects of Confucius" (1950); "Women of Trachis" (1954); Cantos 85, 86, 87, 88, and 89 (1955); and Cantos 96 and 97 (1956).

Sincerely,
Frederick Morgan

I accompanied this letter with a personal note to William Phillips, editor of *Partisan Review*, whom I know slightly, stating that it was my reply to Sorrentino's misstatement about the *Hudson Review* in his current issue. I expected that I would hear from Phillips in a week or so, that he would give me assurance of publishing my letter, that he would give Sorrentino, and perhaps Barone, the customary privilege of writing a rejoinder, and that he might possibly decide to comment on the matter himself. This is how the editors of the *Hudson Review* would have handled such a situation. But I received no reply at all. A follow-up letter dated May 13 also went unanswered, and on June 15 I finally wrote Phillips an ultimatum of sorts, as follows:

Dear William,

On April 27 I wrote you a Letter to the Editor, correcting a gross misstatement about *The Hudson Review* by Gilbert Sorrentino, which was published in your Volume XLVIII, No. 2. I received no reply. On May 13 I wrote to you again, requesting confirmation that you had received the April 27 letter and would be publishing it in the next issue of *Partisan Review*. Once again, I have received no reply. I am astonished by this neglect of elementary editorial courtesy.

This is to advise you that if I have not received from you by June 25 written confirmation that you will be publishing my letter *in full* in your next issue I shall take the necessary steps to have it brought out in some other publication or publications.

Sincerely,
Frederick Morgan

Ten days later, I received my first reply from *Partisan Review:*

Dear Mr. Morgan:

Your letter struck our editorial board as a bit of self-promotion which would normally go in an exchange ad. However, we will publish it as soon as we can.

Sincerely,
Maura J. Carey
Production Manager

I meditated on this little piece of insolence for three or four days and, having reached the conclusion that *Partisan Review* could not be counted on for even a modicum of honesty or efficiency, made the following response:

Dear Ms. Carey,

Your note of June 18 confirms the widely held view that the decline in quality and importance of *Partisan Review* has been accompanied by a comparable decline in editorial responsibility and simple good manners.

Your noncommittal statement, "we will publish it as soon as we can," is not adequate as confirmation that you will be publishing my April 27 letter "in full in your next issue," as requested in my last. I am accordingly withdrawing my letter and will make arrangements to have it published elsewhere.

Sincerely,
Frederick Morgan

Meanwhile, I had received a letter from Gilbert Sorrentino. I had not communicated with him at the start, considering this to be Phillips's responsibility, not mine; but on June 15 I decided to send him copies of my April 27 and June 15 letters to *Partisan Review*. Sorrentino's letter was dated June 19, and I quote the bulk of it herewith:

Dear Mr. Morgan:

As you know, the interview, as published, runs from pages 236 to 246. The original, unedited interview in typescript covers twenty 8½ × 11 pages single-spaced. I don't know who edited the typescript into the form in which it was published—either Barone or the *Partisan Review* editors or both—but I did not see proofs of the final version.

In the light of your contention concerning what you term my "gross misstatement" in reference to the late Paul Blackburn and to my remark that "young men would not be accepted in *The Hudson Review*" in the mid-fifties, the following passage

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from the *unedited* transcript of Mr. Barone's interview may be of interest to you.

> My generation, when the war ended, was anywhere between 16 and 20 years old, so ten years later, at let's say 1955, we were all between 26 and 30, a time at which you have decided what you really want to do. Before that it's all sort of amorphous. So everybody was at that age at which you've committed yourself. To give you an idea of the curious age it was: I had seen some of Paul Blackburn's translations in *The Hudson Review* and thought that Paul was about 45. It never occurred to me that someone my age could publish in *The Hudson Review*. It seemed so closed, so completely alien. When I met Paul I was astonished. He was my age. Do you know the story by Williams called "The Farmers' Daughters"...? Well, that story was originally published in *The Hudson Review*. He gave me that story to read in I would guess 1956 or 1957, which means that at the time he was about 68 or 69 years old. He told me ... that they had accepted the story and three of his poems for publication.... Then he told me something which just floored me. He said that this was the first work of his that *The Hudson Review* had ever accepted.... Those editors were dedicated to a poetic that had no use for Williams—you can see what they must have thought of young writers who thought of him as a great poet. It was a time when young men would not be in *The Hudson Review*.

This unpublished passage will, I am certain, reveal that (1) I was aware that Paul Blackburn had published in *The Hudson Review*, and (2) that by "young men" I meant, as evidenced by context, young men who did not share the aesthetic of the editors of *The Hudson Review*. Surely, the thirty-odd writers that you list as "young" and published by *The Hudson Review* in the mid-fifties had very little, if anything, to do with the literary aesthetic evident in the writings of Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Robert Creeley, Edward Dorn, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg, et al., who were the "young men" that, it seems quite clear to me, I referred to. The interview, even as published, makes the point, rightly or wrongly, that the "established" world of letters was, by and large, hostile to young writers who seemed to break with what that established world thought of as the modern tradition.

Sincerely,
Gilbert Sorrentino

This letter made it clear that it was incompetent editing by *Partisan Review*, and perhaps also by Barone, which made it appear that Sorrentino did not know about the *Hudson Review*'s publication of Paul Blackburn's Provençal translations—but it also raised several other issues. I addressed these in the last and longest letter of the series—to Gilbert Sorrentino, dated June 26:

Dear Mr. Sorrentino,

Many thanks for your letter of June 19. I was pleased to receive it, and grateful for its measured and moderate tone. It raises some interesting questions.

First of all, let's get the William Carlos Williams business straight. According to your unedited transcript, Williams showed you his story "The Farmers' Daughters" in 1956 or 1957 (probably 1956: that was the year we accepted it), told you that *The Hudson Review* had accepted it and three of his poems for publication, and then "just floored" you by saying that "this was the first work of his that *The Hudson Review* had ever accepted." The implication is that he had submitted other work to us previously, which we had rejected. But this is not the case. "The Farmers' Daughters" and the three poems were the first things by Williams to be accepted by us, because they were the first things he ever sent us, and he did so in response to a letter from me in which I expressed warm interest in and admiration for his work, and asked him to send me something. This happy contact having been successfully made, *The Hudson Review* went on to publish Williams on several other occasions before the onset of his final illness six years or so later. We also published the moving tribute to him by Robert Lowell, in which Lowell states that "Williams is part of the great breath of our literature. *Paterson* is our *Leaves of Grass*." I might add that right up to the end Williams and I maintained a spasmodic but amiable correspondence which I still cherish. How, then, can you possibly be justified in stating that the editors of *The Hudson Review* were "dedicated to a poetic that had no use for Williams"? Such a statement goes directly against the facts, which are right there on the record for all to see. With regard to the "young writers who thought of Williams as a great poet," our position was then, as it would be now, that this was all a matter of the individual case. Obviously, not all young writers who admired Williams would write anywhere near as well as he did—far from it—but we were open to the ones who did.

The same bias against *The Hudson Review* is revealed in your comment about Paul Blackburn.

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You read Blackburn's translations in *The Hudson Review,* and liked them. A natural conclusion, it would seem to me, would be that you might decide that *The Hudson Review* was your kind of magazine. But no—you concluded instead that Blackburn must be "about forty-five." Why? Because you had already fixed firmly in your head the notion that *The Hudson Review* was inhospitable to young writers.

It would be interesting to understand the origins of this prejudice (or preconception if you prefer). I must assume that work by you and by some of your friends was rejected by us. (Please correct me if I am wrong in this: after so many years I don't retain the specific recollection.) I'll readily admit that we have not published work by any of the writers in your list (except Ginsberg, and that was much later), but I strongly deny your right to conclude from this that *The Hudson Review* was at any time hostile or indifferent to the work of young writers in general. This is the basic misstatement, the basic slander, which I am at pains to refute in my letter to *Partisan Review.* Even had your interview been published in its original form, this issue would remain.

Come to think of it, it seems almost as if you and your group believed that you were the only young writers doing significant work at that time. It may be that you were right—if so, *The Hudson Review* missed the boat, for whatever reason, in not having published you. But it is also possible that you were mistaken.

I was fascinated to learn that in the eyes of you and your friends at that time, *The Hudson Review* was part of the "established" world of letters. In 1952, when we published Blackburn's translations, we had only been going for four years, we were struggling to maintain our existence, had very little money, were operating out of a dingy single-room office in a largely abandoned factory building on West Street (very near your present address), and were quite regularly targeted for disparagement and abuse in the pages of publications which *we* considered to be representative of the literary establishment in those years: the New York *Times,* the *Saturday Review, Partisan Review.* How astonished we would have been if someone had come along in those days and told us that in the eyes of a group of writers out there, *we* were the establishment, or part of it!

To come back to Ezra Pound for a moment, there can be no doubt that we did more for him in the 1950s than any other publication. He has said as much himself. In view of your high opinion of him, don't you think that in all fairness you should have acknowledged this—particularly in the light of your various unfavorable references to *The Hudson Review*? Credit where credit is due, after all.

The immediate issue at hand, of course, is not your interview in its original, uncut, unpublished form, but your interview as it was published and made widely available in the pages of *Partisan Review.* The end product is what counts in these matters, and in this case, even though the interview may have been edited incompetently or in such a way as partly to alter your meaning, I think you must accept your share of the responsibility for the end product—for it was you, after all, who were the focus of the piece, it was your opinions and judgments that were being reproduced. And here I remain unyielding. A serious misstatement was made—and my colleagues and I insist that the record be set straight. I am accordingly determined to make my letter public.

How I shall go about this, however, is by no means certain at this point, since it seems impossible to extract an honest and forthright reply from *Partisan Review.*

Sincerely,
Frederick Morgan

Fortunately, there are still a few publications left which are concerned with the accuracy of the record. Was this all a tempest in a teapot? I don't think so. I still think it's important to get these damned things straight.

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The Reader Replies

George P. Elliott

The George P. Elliott to whom Robert Brustein pays such inaccurate and condescending tribute in the Summer 1981 issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is not the colleague and dear friend whom I knew from 1972 to 1980. Brustein's Elliott is crabbed, bitter, disappointed; I knew a radiant, generous man who enraged the petty, the dilettantish, the doctrinaire, and the humorless by refusing to compromise his values or his dignity, and who, for the same reason, won the love of everyone who really knew him. Wherever I went, as soon as I said I taught at Syracuse, George was the first person anyone mentioned. Over and over I was told to send love to him. People meant it. There was nothing grudging in anyone's feeling for him; people did not feel that they had to respect his talent and endure his personality.

He was cantankerous and opinionated, of course, and unabashed in both his love for beauty and goodness and his belief that he could discriminate the beautiful from the ugly, the good from the bad. I disagreed with him often, primarily because I thought he valued beauty too much and justice too little—but such disagreements are the beginnings of true conversation. I never saw one hint of the querulousness that Brustein suggests. What I remember is the flush and twinkle in his face when he suggested some perfectly outrageous idea for the sake of a friendly argument—the same flush and twinkle I saw when I gave him a piece of chocolate cake. He loved to talk, he loved to argue, he loved friends whom he could count on for impassioned conversation. He was a rare writer, because he really did want to argue.

Perhaps he did wish for more success and recognition than he got, but to me he looked like a man marching to his different drummer with a mixture of sorrow, contentment, and pride. He never complained; he never expressed envy; he never insulted the work of anyone else in order to praise his own. He was not an egotist. He never made himself out to be a sensitive and suffering artist in the style of Byron and Yeats; he was whole, in the way I imagine Browning and Fielding were. Browning and Fielding are, of course, not the types of artists or personalities in fashion now, and perhaps that is why George knew he did not quite fit in the literary elite. Fashion was one of the ideas about which he thought most profoundly; his mind was so subtly historical—or so eternally spiritual—that he gave little credence to phrases like "we've advanced beyond that now" or "the times demand." He put himself on the line as a conservative, knowing perfectly well that he would be attacked. But is it too bold to suggest that he may have been—to use a phrase he would have hated—ahead of his time? Certainly his essay on pornography, which was derided when it was published, is finally coming into its own. He was right: pornography has not turned out to be the harmless amusement we thought it was fifteen years ago, but is a growing horror. In spite of all George's public disagreements with the women's movement, hasn't he proved to be a better friend to women, in seeing pornography for what it is, than any other man writing today?

Having said this, I feel both absurd and outraged—the idea of justifying or apologizing for George Elliott! I saw him almost everyday for eight years, and though I was occasionally furious with him, I never doubted that I was in the presence of greatness. No moment spent with George was trivial or degraded. He was always intelligent, loving, generous, and above all, serious. He always talked about important things. And, at the same time, he never pontificated; conversations were always intimate and personal. He gave dignity and value to ordinary life. I miss him everyday.

JUDITH WEISSMAN
Department of English
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York

ROBERT BRUSTEIN replies: I have very mixed feelings about Professor Weissman's letter. On the one hand, I am happy that my attempt to memorialize our mutual friend, George P. Elliott, provoked such a warm and loving tribute from her; George deserves many such tributes and will in time receive them. But I am bewildered by Professor Weissman's anger, especially by the fact that she could think my article "condescending," when I loved and honored the man no less than she. I have no illusions that what I wrote about George was definitive, or that it was an accurate reflection of anybody else's friendship or experience. I did try to tell something of my own experience with this

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fine and decent man, hoping that by describing what I perceived to be his conflicts and sufferings, even some of his quarrels, I might be able better to define his heroism. The odd thing is that I am in total agreement with everything Professor Weissman writes about George Elliott, though she offers her remarks in outraged refutation of my own. George would be the last person to want to see his friends start quarreling over the meaning of his life. For that reason, I want to say that I am grateful for Professor Weissman's memories of George and apologize for anything in my own that might have angered her.

Forgetting the Questions

In "Forgetting the Questions" (Summer 1981), Diane Ravitch seems far, far away from contemporary schools. She talks in terms that once upon a time may have meant something specific, but not anymore. Terms like *meaning, philosophy, history, education, literature.* Every one of these terms has come under intense scrutiny in the twentieth century and, as a result, does not reflect any consensus of meaning. One of the reasons why schools do not ask what an educated person is and what knowledge is the most valuable is due to the fact that there is no *one* definition in our society. Rather we can say that there are so many definitions that there cannot be any agreement. Miss Ravitch uses terms in the way they were used in the thirties, forties, and fifties when there was still some contact with the nineteenth-century view of man, which accepted the idea of stability and permanence of vision. She is looking through a rear-view mirror instead of through her windshield. New perceptions are all over the road and no one knows which ones will spring up in front of us as signposts to the future. Miss Ravitch's diction and phraseology are passé. They remind me of my beloved John Dewey, but Dewey's ethics are passé. Furthermore, there is hardly a mention of the new media in her article. When mention appears, it is in pejorative ways.

Besides all this, she utters the same tired complaints that I have heard for thirty years—that kids don't know anything, can't write, and can't recall the history of man in chronological order. These clichés lead me to believe that she has not spent any extended amount of time in a public school. In fact, the whole essay is one long intellectual cliché, out of touch with reality.

There *is* no solution to the problems of education. Questions about education are similar to questions about the meaning of life: in our age they are unanswerable. Do you know anybody who knows the meaning of life—his own or the totality of society's? After Einstein, Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, it's not for us to know any longer. This is the agony of the modern; therefore, the agony of education. It is also a great challenge as we stumble on to new outposts.

August Franza
Chairman, English Department
Miller Place High School
Miller Place, New York

Diane Ravitch replies: I thank Mr. August Franza for responding to my article, for he has demonstrated the point I was making better than any of my arguments. Is it possible, I asked, that in constructing the grand edifice of American education we have forgotten why we wanted everyone to stay in school for so long? Is it enough to pat ourselves on the back for extending the years of school going and decreasing the drop-out rate if we don't remember the difference between a diploma and the knowledge that the diploma is supposed to signify? Mr. Franza considers it impertinent and irrelevant to raise such questions. He dismisses out of hand "terms like *meaning, philosophy, history, education, literature.*" Into the ash can of history with them, says the postmodern educator, a man who is bold enough to look forward into the void, rather than backward to the time when such terms had meaning and when it was believed that *education* was a means of transmitting cultural *meanings* (through *literature, philosophy,* and *history*) across the generations. Since there are questions without answers, says Mr. Franza, let us not trouble ourselves or our students with them. To one who has tossed aside the past with the conclusion that "it's not for us to know any longer," education must indeed be an agony, and never a source of joy or meaning.

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